MOLIÈRE IN STENDHAL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF THREE CHARACTER TYPES

THESIS

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This paper explores the appearance of three of Molière's character types in Stendhal's novels *The Red and the Black* and *The Charterhouse of Parma*. Molière had dealt in many types to which the titles of his plays provide a reasonably inclusive index—the Don Juan, the miser, the misanthrope, the hypochondriac. Those which have been singled out for comparison with Stendhal's characters in this work are the physician, the hypocrite, and the social climber, each of which is treated extensively by Stendhal, with the qualification that Molière's physicians become Stendhal's priests.

Chapter One identifies Julien Sorel of *The Red and the Black* and Fabrizio del Dongo of *The Charterhouse of Parma* with the physicians of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* and *Le Malade Imaginaire*. Chapter Two identifies Julien with Tartuffe. Chapter Three identifies him with Jourdain of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. 
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INTRODUCTION

Stendhal's passion for the stage makes it less than surprising that the comedy, the tragedy, even the opera found their way into his novels, saturated them, in fact, affecting now structure, now character, now dialogue. Perhaps what appealed to Stendhal most about theater was, to use an ignoble word, its melodrama. More in evidence in his own work than any other theatrical borrowing is the coup de théâtre, a device which he uses with both dexterity and enthusiasm. In The Red and the Black Julien not only shoots Mme. de Rénal in a church, he also brandishes a sword at Mathilde in her father's antechamber; he climbs in and out of boudoir windows on ladders in the dead of the night, twice half naked and once with dogs barking after him and pistol shots whizzing overhead. In The Charterhouse of Parma the dramatics are even less inhibited; there disguises, murders, imprisonments in lonely towers, messages transmitted by aria, clandestine meetings, midnight processions, all are in evidence to testify to the concrete influence upon Stendhal of the years of his intense apprenticeship to the theater, the time during which he deliberately shaped his thought by "frequently reading the greatest dramatists in existence: Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles,
Shakespeare, Corneille, Alfieri, Racine, Aristophanes, Molière, Goldoni, Plautus,”¹ and by attending the theater almost nightly: he "took his place in the queue outside the pit entrance of the Français and patiently submitted to two hours of heat or cold, rain or snow, before the doors finally opened and the wild scramble for seats began. Squeezed in on a hard bench between clerks and delivery boys, this fastidious little aristocrat regarded the play with a critical eye, afterward returning to his room to analyze it and write out his impressions."²

Stendhal identified his two great passions as love and gloire, in reverse order;³ his inspiration was at one with that of Corneille and, more particularly, Racine. The concept of gloire which he met in their works, especially in Phèdre, passed through the filter of Beylisme and emerged as the devoir of Julien Sorel. The notions are extremely close, the great difference between them being that Phèdre's gloire is a public morality, Julien Sorel's devoir a private aesthetic. Stendhal, that very private man, transformed the public


²Ibid., from Sage's introduction to his third division of the diaries, "A Molière in the Making," p. 45.

character of the classical archetype which Frazer describes in The Golden Bough and which may perhaps be denominated king-duty (because the king's health and well-being are an extension of that of the people) into a more manageable concept. In Stendhal gloire as devoir exists wholly in spite of other people, ruthlessly, in fact; it exists in terms of self—it becomes, in short, Stendhalian. The only exception to its wholly personal nature is that its character originates, like the classical concept, in public opinion, which is decided by the public good. But although public standards determined Julien's private ones, he feels far less answerable to the public than to himself. The reverse is true of Phèdre, who is caught up in the exigencies of both the archetype and of classical tragedy, so that her fate both represents and determines the fate of others. Perhaps the necessity for a chorus or other audience upon the stage to be aware of or even witness the downfall of the king or king figure is a result of the public nature of his function; for in classical tragedy, the final event is not official if there is no one to pronounce upon it. Significantly, in The Red and the Black it is only Julien who knows why he dies. No one else knows at all. Mathilde thinks he is stubborn, perhaps romantic; Mme. de Rênal does not think at all, she only suffers; Fouqué is good but he has no understanding. It is only Julien who recognizes his tragic error, that he had made his
happiness depend upon possessing something which he could in fact possess. And his recognition is sufficient and satisfying. No chorus need proclaim it at large, because Julien is his own excuse for being. He is answerable to himself alone.

Again there are particularly striking parallels between Julien and Cherubino in Mozart's Marriage of Figaro, an opera which Stendhal admired extravagantly. Both are dependents in the houses of rich men whose wives they try to seduce; both have occasion to jump out their ladies' windows to escape jealous masters; both are characterized by their possession of a certain feminine quality and by shockingly self-centered love. Julien's feminine looks are remarked more than once. Mme. de Rénal imagines when she first sees him that "the little peasant's complexion was so white, his eyes so gentle . . . that this might be a girl in disguise."4 Stendhal observes that "his girlish face, so pale and gentle" hides the intensity of his determination to get on in the world. Cherubino, of course, is sung by a woman; he

4 Stendhal, The Red and the Black, translated by Lloyd C. Parks (New York, 1970), p. 36. All second references to works by Stendhal and Molière are documented in the text.

It should be noted that Molière's verse presents serious difficulties in translation; and, rather than resort to as many as three different translators for a single play, I have quoted from him in the French. However, the Lloyd Parks translation of Le Rouge et le Noir and the C. K. Scott-Moncrieff translation of La Chartreuse de Parme serve the purposes of this paper more than adequately, and I have therefore felt justified in quoting from Stendhal in English.
cavorts like a delightful girl and expresses himself like one, with a
certain quaint, whimsical preciosity. He has a kind of cherubic
innocence, like a fat cupid with éclair on his face, which contradicts
both his maleness and his adolescence. He showers kisses on his
lady's ribbons, but Cherubino's kisses are a confection--sticky,
pink, wrapped in paper laces. His love is idle and delighted; its
focus is his own playful, tender, nudging eroticism, uncomplicated
by any other reality, for it answers its own need. The self-
centeredness of Cherubino's love is a function of his adolescence; that
of Julien's is less subtle. It is the function of an ego involvement
which is so intense that it almost precludes sexuality as a motive for
lovemaking. Hence Julien is as innocent of sexuality as Cherubino,
because he thinks only of seduction, which is quite a different thing.

Their feminine quality is again expressed in their tears;
Julien's first response to Mme. de Rênal is to weep; when he resorts
to tears in her bedroom he becomes her master. When Cherubino
weeps, although she does not make him the happiest of men, the
countess does console him and is kind to him. There is a difference,
however, in that Julien's tears are an expression of his true nature
breaking out of a role; Cherubino's somehow seem so sly as to be
worthy of the Machiavellianism which Julien expresses in other ways.
The epigraphs introducing many of the chapters of *The Charterhouse of Parma* are so many allusions to Stendhal's involvement with theater. But outdistancing all his other enthusiasms was his unflagging admiration for Molière. "The comic Parnassus," he wrote, "is composed of Molière, Regnard, and Goldoni."\(^5\) Stendhal's object was to be such a "'comic poet,'" the "'nineteenth century Molière.'"\(^6\) The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate one influence which Stendhal's infatuation with the theater, and especially Molière's theater, had upon his works; specifically, the appearance of three of Molière's character types in Stendhal's novels *The Red and the Black* and *The Charterhouse of Parma*. Molière had dealt in many types to which the titles of his plays provide a reasonably inclusive index—the Don Juan, the miser, the misanthrope, the hypochondriac. Those which have been singled out for comparison with Stendhal's characters in this work are the physician, the hypocrite, and the social climber, each of which is treated extensively by Stendhal, with the qualification that Molière's physicians become Stendhal's priests.

Chapter One attempts to establish that certain of Stendhal's priests are derivative of Molière's physicians in that they are

\(^5\)Stendhal, *Diaries*, p. 61.

\(^6\)Ibid., from Sage's introduction to the third division, p. 45.
ignore their ignorance behind distracting devices which include Latin and the authority of the past and in that they are either stupid or sly, indifferent to the arts they profess, and willing to misuse their offices to obtain wealth and women. In addition this chapter compares Molière's moral assessment of the physician on the one hand with Stendhal's assessment of the priest on the other.

Chapter Two attempts to establish a consistent identification of The Red and the Black with Molière's Tartuffe. It enumerates similarities of plot and also similarities between Stendhal's secondary characters de Rénal, Valenod, and Fouqué and Molière's Orgon, Damis, and Valère, respectively. The principle emphasis of the chapter, however, is on correspondences between Julien and Tartuffe themselves. They are compared in their ingratitude, their mercenary traffic in religion, their aggressiveness, their willingness to punish themselves in the interests of perfecting their hypocrisy. Again there is some attempt at a moral evaluation of Julien and Tartuffe; this is offered largely in the context of Thibaudet's controversial opinion that Tartuffe's final revenge is Samsonian in character.

Chapter Three relates Julien Sorel to that other social climber, Jourdain of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. It demonstrates that like Molière, Stendhal finds the machinations of the socially ambitious bourgeois doomed to failure by the necessity for a gentleman's
being born to the aristocracy. It also shows that Stendhal's treatment of Julien parallels Molière's treatment of Jourdain in that both characters are made ridiculous by the intensity of an ambition which causes them to evaluate themselves and the outside world inaccurately and which robs them of intellectual independence and betrays them through their excessive vanity and self-consciousness. Both are shown misinterpreting the motives of others and miscalculating the distance between themselves and their superiors. This chapter undertakes a more ambitious moral evaluation of Stendhal and Molière; it discovers that Stendhal perceived in Molière's work an underlying assumption that morality is a function of manners, and attempts to show that such an assumption is also at the heart of The Red and the Black.
CHAPTER I

MOLIÈRE'S PHYSICIAN AND STENDHAL'S PRIEST

A survey of the similarities between the professions practiced by physicians and priests may begin with the observation that it is the medical, not the divinity degree, which is lightly referred to as the "god" degree. Physicians and priests share the charge of life and death; "they speak with the same formidable authority, anathematize with the same deadly enthusiasm, and welcome candidates with somewhat similar rites."\(^1\) They are in official attendance at the ceremonies of birth and death, the one charged with ministering to the physical being and the other to the spiritual, the one with maintaining temporal life and the other with assuring it eternally. Both professions involve an education which strikes the layman as esoteric, and both consequently involve mysteries which he cannot penetrate. For his life on this side of the grave and the other, he must trust to the initiated. It is therefore unfortunate that neither profession has a proficiency subject to an easy proof. Ailing people live or die with or

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without physicians, and the correspondence between treatment and cure was even vaguer in Molière's time than it is in our own. It is not surprising that when treatment for disease was "sought . . . through prayers, stars, kings, toads and science" (which half the time prescribed bleedings and the other half enemas), and when medicine is said to have offered a greater threat to the health of man than at any other time in history, it was difficult to establish a causal relationship between treatment and cure; indeed, any relationship which may have existed was probably either random or inverse. The efficacy of the practices of religion is even more obscure. And, as both the medical and the priestly professions are beyond proof, both are conducive to charlatanism and perverted ends. False medical man and false priest pretend to have a knowledge which they do not have, pretend to perform a service which they do not perform, and generally play the part of the two mischievous tailors who sat conspicuously sewing invisible garments for the gullible emperor. Molière, and Stendhal in his turn, play the unspoiled children with eyes to see the naked truth; for Stendhal was as sceptical of priests as Molière had been of physicians, and in Julien Sorel, Fabrizio del

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Dongo, and a host of lesser clergymen, he deliberately recalled Molière's attacks on men of medicine. The object of this chapter, then, is to demonstrate certain correspondences between Molière's physician and Stendhal's typical priest. I will show that both are ignorant and hide their ignorance behind distracting devices which include Latin and the authority of the past; that they are represented as either stupid or sly, that they are indifferent to the arts they profess, and that they misuse their offices to obtain wealth and women. I will show that although both physician and priest are depicted as monstrously wicked, the priest essentially has the worst of it. Finally, I will compare Molière's moral assessment of the physician on the one hand with Stendhal's assessment of the priest on the other.

The most obvious device of false priest and false physician is esoteric learning—learning which cannot be evaluated by those who are not initiated, and which becomes the stock in trade of those who are, so that only people with an interest in the preservation of certain religious or medical practices are able to judge whether these deserve to be preserved. The language of this esoteric learning in both religion and medicine is (or was) Latin, and it is upon Latin which both Molière and Stendhal seize to expose first the ignorance and second the duplicity of physician and priest. Presumably a badge of learning, it is used as a shield to hide their ignorance by Julien Sorel.
as by Sganarelle of *Le Medecin Malgrè Lui*, Diafoirus and Purgon of *Le Malade Imaginaire*, and any number of less significant physicians who have immortalized their emetic prescriptions upon Molière's stage. Sganarelle's first great success accompanies his ecstatic discovery that Géronte does not understand Latin:

SGANARELLE, se tenant avec étonnement.  
Vous n'entendez point le latin!  
GÉRONTE. -Non.  
SGANARELLE, en faisant diverses plaisantes postures.  
-Cabriacis arcithuram, catalamus,  
singulariter, nominativo haec Musa, "la Muse", bonus,  
bona, bonum, Deus sanctus, estne oratio latinas?  
Étiam, "ouïe. Quare, "pourquoi"? Quia substantivo  
et adjectivum concordat in generi, numerum, et casus.  
GÉRONTE. Ah! que n'ai-je étudié?  
JACQUELINE. L'habile homme que vela!  
LUCAS. Oui, ça est si biau que je n'y entends goutte.  

Latin is put to comparable use in *Le Malade Imaginaire*. When Angélique, in an attempt to postpone her marriage to Thomas, argues that "la grande marque d'amour, c'est d'être soumis aux volontés de celle qu'on aime," Thomas appropriately encloses his specious reply in Latin phrases: "Distinguo, Mademoiselle: dans ce qui ne regarde point sa possession, concedo; mais dans ce qui la regarde, nego" (II. vi).

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With the display which Julien and the mayor of Verrières make on Julien's first day as tutor, Stendhal parallels Sganarelle's erudition and also its effect on his auditors.

"Open [the Latin Testament] at random," Julien continued, "and tell me the first three words of a paragraph. I will recite the Holy Book, the golden rule for us all, by heart, until you stop me."

Aldoph opened the book, read three words, and Julien recited the whole page as easily as if he were speaking French. M. de Rênal beamed at his wife triumphantly. The children, seeing their parents' astonishment, opened their eyes wide. A servant came to the drawing room door; Julien went on speaking Latin.

M. de Rênal's vanity was piqued; far from having any thoughts of examining the tutor himself, he was busy racking his memory for a few words in Latin; he managed eventually to quote a line from Horace. All the Latin Julien knew was his Bible. He answered with a frown, "The sacred ministry to which I will dedicate myself forbids me to read such a profane poet."

M. de Rênal recited quite a number of supposed verses from Horace.

That evening, all of Verrières' high society flocked to M. de Rênal's house to see the wonder. (pp. 41-44)

Like Sganarelle Julien uses his Latin to awaken admiration and envy in an audience more ignorant than himself; de Rênal, in his turn, capitalizing on the ignorance which Julien claims of "profane poet[s]," invents a little Horace. No one is critical of either performance; and the wonder of Verrières is not more celebrated than Sganarelle—"Vous ne sauriez croire," exclaims that quack gleefully, "comment l'erreur s'est répandue, et de quelle façon chacun est endiable à me croire habile homme. On me vient chercher de tous
les côtés" (III. i). In both Julien's and Sganarelle's cases, fame is the fruit of well-packaged ignorance and deceit. For Julien's religion, although he does know his Bible, is exactly as precarious as Sganarelle's medicine, since he has none; and his learning is almost as superficial. He has had access to thirty or forty books, all but three of which he considers "lies, written by cheats for the sake of getting ahead" (p. 30). As his knowledge of history is limited to the campaign of 1796 (p. 28), his knowledge of Latin is confined to his memorized Testament: "Julien had one of those amazing memories that so often go hand in hand with foolishness" (p. 30).

As he uses bastard Latin to shield his ignorance, Sganarelle uses his outrageous, senseless ad-libbing to shield his duplicity—when, for example, he is trying to distract Géronte's attention from Lucinde and Léandre. "Monsieur," he says,

>c'est une grande et subtile question entre les doctes, de savoir si les femmes sont plus faciles à guérir que les hommes. Je vous prie d'écouter ceci, s'il vous plaît. Les uns disent que non, les autres disent que oui; et moi je dis que oui et non: d'autant que l'incongruité des humeurs opaques qui se rencontrent au tempérament naturel des femmes étant cause que la partie brutale veut toujours prendre empire sur la sensitive, on voit que l'inégalité de leurs opinions dépend du mouvement oblique du cercle de la lune; et comme le soleil, qui darde ses rayons sur la concavité de la terre, trouve ...

(III. vi)

For the species of foolishness with which Molière supplied
Sganarelle, Stendhal substitutes Julien's phenomenal memory, and to the same befuddling effect:

It was useless for [Abbé Pirard] to question Julien in an effort to find out whether he believed seriously in M. de Maistre's doctrine. The young man answered only from memory. From that moment on Julien was really very fine; he felt he was master of himself.

(p. 178)

The mechanical priestly defense is as distracting to the prospective critic as Sganarelle's lunacy and, no doubt, as frustrating.

Although somewhat less spectacularly, Stendhal uses it again in The Charterhouse of Parma when the Prince attempts to quiz Fabrizio on his politics.

"Well, Monsignore," he said to Fabrizio, "and the people of Naples, are they happy? Is the King loved?"

"Serene Highness," Fabrizio replied without a moment's hesitation, "I used to admire, when they passed me in the street, the excellent bearing of the troops of the various regiments of His Majesty the King; the better classes are respectful towards their masters, as they ought to be; but I must confess that, all my life, I have never allowed the lower orders to speak to me about anything but the work for which I am paying them."

"Plague!" said the Prince, "what a slyboots! This is a well-trained bird, I recognize the Sanseverina touch."

Molière's physicians and most of Stendhal's priests, when they are not depicted as "slyboots," are shown to be stupid instead.

As early as 1804 Stendhal, returned from hearing prayers for his

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dead relative M. Daru, remarked "the base and occasionally malevolent physiognomy of the priests; those with the best faces had a stupid appearance." When the Prince anticipates meeting Fabrizio, he tells himself that he will "see a saintly little simpleton, a mean or a sly face" (p. 160), because the chief options open to the priesthood are the simplicity which characterizes the Besançon seminarians and the slyness of M. de Frilair, the wicked, foxlike priest in The Red and the Black whose "countenance would have appeared more solemn except for the great cunning apparent in certain features, which might have suggested even falseness had the owner of this handsome face stopped being concerned for one moment about this possibility" (p. 210). The same options of cunning and stupidity are open to Molière's physicians. Their slyness ranges from the exaggerated subtlety of the learned doctor in La Jalousie du Barbouillé, who pays such court to particulars that he never arrives at the truth of anything (so that in effect he is so sly that he is stupid), to the considerably less subtle machinations of Diafoirus and Purgon and the outrageous stupidities of Thomas Diafoirus. In La Jalousie du Barbouillé the learned doctor's help is inaccessible to any important matter because in attempting to render it he is invariably misled by his subtlety to

6 Stendhal, Diaries, p. 62.
respond to the wrong stimulus; he cannot extricate himself from pedantic trivia.

LE DOCTEUR. ... Venez ça, vous, dites-moi un peu quelle est la cause, le sujet de votre combustion.

LE BARBOUILLE. Monsieur le Docteur ... LE DOCTEUR. Voilà qui est bien commencé: "Monsieur le Docteur!" ce mot de docteur a quelque chose de doux à l'oreille, quelque chose plein d'emphase: "Monsieur le Docteur!"

LE BARBOUILLE. À la mienne volonté ... LE DOCTEUR. Voilà qui est bien: "À la mienne volonté!" La volonté présuppose le souhait, le souhait présuppose des moyens pour arriver à ses fins, et la fin présuppose un objet: voilà qui est bien: "À la mienne volonté!"

LE BARBOUILLE. J'enrage.
LE DOCTEUR. Otez-moi ce mot: "J'enrage"; voilà un terme bas et populaire.

LE BARBOUILLE. Hé! Monsieur le Docteur, écoutez-moi, de grâce.

LE DOCTEUR. Audi, quaeso, aurait dit Cicéron. (I. vi)

Like Mme. de Rénaud, who applies to religion for the guidance which leads her to write her fatal letter to La Mole, Le Barbouillé applies to the learned doctor for bread and is given a stone. In L'Amour Médecin the medical mentality is expressed by the ineptitude of the four physicians attendant upon Lucinde; they are as much in accord as the four real-life physicians who attended Mazarin in his last illness and who "severally declared that the seat of the malady
was the liver, the abdomen, the spleen and the lungs respectively."

It is Thomas Diafoirus, however, who prefigures most admirably the dullness which Stendhal recommends above all other qualities for a priest. "Il n'a jamais eu l'imagination bien vive, ni ce feu d'esprit qu'on remarque dans quelques-uns," Diafoirus, Sr., says, with some complacency, of his son,

mais c'est par là que j'ai toujours bien auguré de sa judiciaire. . . . On eut toutes les peines du monde à lui apprendre à lire, et il avait neuf ans, qu'il ne connaissait pas encore ses lettres. "Bon, dissaïs-je en moi-même, les arbres tardifs sont ceux qui portent les meilleurs fruits; on grave sur le marbre bien plus malaisément que sur le sable; mais les choses y sont conservées bien plus longtemps, et cette lenteur à comprendre, cette pesanteur d'imagination, est la marque d'un bon jugement à venir." (II. v)

In The Red and the Black Stendhal demonstrates a comparable stupidity on the part of most of Besançon's seminarians and a carefully cultivated imitation of it on the part of the rest of them.

Eight or ten seminarians lived in the odor of sanctity and had visions like St. Theresa's. . . . Those poor young visionaries were in the infirmary most of the time.

7 Palmer, Molière, p. 415. Palmer, by the way, remarks that the doctor in Barbouillé is not a physician but a philosopher (p. 411). He does however dress like a physician; and in addition to that he is, as he informs us, ten times a doctor; he is the universal doctor; and, moreover, "je contiens en moi tous les autres docteurs." In any event, physician or none, he certainly shares with Molière's physicians their celebrated pedantry.
the time. Some hundred of the others combined a robust faith with tireless application. They worked to the point of making themselves sick, but without learning much.

... The rest of the three hundred and twenty-one seminarians was made up of nothing but boors, who were never quite sure that they understood the Latin words they repeated all day long...

... But what Julien didn't know, and what they were careful not to tell him, was that to be first in the various courses in dogma, in ecclesiastical history, etc., etc., which are studied in a seminary, was in their eyes nothing but a "resplendent" sin. ... the Church of France seems to have understood that its real enemies are books.

... "Alas! the ignorance of these young peasants, my companions, is an immense advantage to them," Julien would cry out in his moments of discouragement. ...

Julien kept studying with attention bordering on envy, the most boorish of the little peasants who came into the seminary. (pp. 182-187)

Similarly, in The Charterhouse of Parma, Gina lectures to Fabrizio upon the attitude which he must adopt to please M. Landriani, that priest of "keen, extensive, and deep intelligence: he is sincere, he loves virtue" (I, 164): "Be simple, apostolic, no cleverness, no brilliance, no prompt repartee; if you do not startle him at all, he will be delighted with you" (I, 165).

Having praised his son for being stupid, Diafoirus goes on to praise him again for being reactionary:

Mais sur toute chose ce qui me plaît en lui, et en quoi il suit mon exemple, c'est qu'il s'attache aveuglément aux opinions de nos anciens, et que jamais il n'a voulu comprendre ni écouter les raisons et les experiences des prétendues découvertes de notre siècle, touchant la circulation du sang, et autres opinions de même farine. (II.v)
And indeed Molière was hardly exaggerating the case; in his time "the men who represented medicine were narrow and bigoted conservatives, accepting blindly all that they had inherited from the ancients and refusing resolutely to depart from the practices of their forefathers." Even "the dress and habit of the physician was still that of the sorcerer. He never stirred abroad without his wig and his gown. He wore a conical hat and rode to his patients upon a mule. . . . His discourse was stuffed with technical terms and allusions to theories which had misled his historic predecessors for over two hundred years. It was thus that he emphasized the hieratic nature of his profession." The authority of the medical past, which Thomas upholds so assiduously, is comparable to the religious authority which even the good Abbé Pirard wishes to protect against the illumination which doubt might cast upon it: regretting Julien's "'thorough, but too thorough, knowledge of the Holy Scriptures,'" the Abbé wonders "'to what does this endless reasoning about the Holy Scriptures lead . . . if not to free inquiry; that is to say, the most dreadful Protestantism? And along with that ill-advised study, nothing on the Fathers to offset this inclination'" (p. 178). Authority, from the past or from any other source, is everything to the priest as it is}

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9 Palmer, Molière, p. 416.
everything to the physician. Before he learns better, Julien appears before his companions "as a free-thinker. . . . In their eyes, he stood convicted of an egregious vice: he thought, he judged for himself, instead of blindly following authority and example" (p. 185).

Purgon recognizes this necessity for authority and excoriates the hypochondriac Argan for threatening it: he utters his dreadful male-diction because, he tells Argan, "Vous vous êtes soustrait de l'obéissance que l'on doit à son médecin," and because "vous vous êtes déclaré rebelle aux remèdes que je vous ordonnais" (III. v). In L'Amour Médecin M. Tomes and M. Des Fonandres are equally jealous of precedent.

M. TOMÈS. Mais à propos, quel parti prenez-vous dans la querelle des deux médecins Théophraste et Arthémius? car c'est une affaire qui partage tout notre corps.

M. DES FONANDRES. Moi, je suis pour Arthémius.

M. TOMÈS. Et moi aussi. Ce n'est pas que son avis, comme on a vu, n'ait tué le malade, et que celui de Théophraste ne fût beaucoup meilleur assurément; mais enfin il a tort dans les circonstances, et il ne devait pas être d'un autre avis que son ancien. Qu'en dites-vous?

M. DES FONANDRES. Sans doute. Il faut toujours garder les formalités, quoi qu'il puisse arriver. (II. iii)

There is some emphasis in Molière on initiation into the medical profession. The ceremony which constitutes Sganarelle's initiation is a beating. Later on he in turn beats Géronte and says, "Vous êtes médecin maintenant: je n'ai jamais eu d'autres licenses"
(II. ii). Julien Sorel's initiation into the priesthood is also a beating, although of another sort: "What he saw in the seminary is perhaps too black for the moderate coloring we have sought to maintain in these pages. Our contemporaries who suffer from certain things cannot be reminded of them without being too horrified to enjoy any pleasure, even that of reading a story" (p. 191). In addition, and more literally, "the strongest of [Julien's seminary] companions meant to make a habit of beating him; Julien was forced to arm himself with a steel compass and let it be known . . . that he would use it" (p. 194). The pious stupidities to which he is exposed at the seminary are comparable to the ludicrous ceremonial examination conducted in bastard Latin which initiates Argan into the medical profession. As Argan learns his ritual medical prescription (Clysterium donare, / Postea seignare, / Ensuita purgare"), Julien learns not only the ritual of the church but also a ritual piety: "What trouble he gave himself to achieve that beatific and sanctimonious expression, that countenance of a blind and fervent faith, which is ready to believe everything, that one finds so frequently in Italian monasteries" (p. 187).

Corresponding passages in Stendhal and Molière demonstrate also that the indifference of Stendhal's religionists to religion is comparable in its expression to the indifference of Molière's healers to healing. Molière has Sganarelle exclaim cheerfully to Géronte,
father of the presumably ailing Lucinde, "Je suis ravi, Monsieur, que votre fille ait besoin de moi; et je souhaiterais de tout mon cœur que vous en eussiez besoin aussi, vous et toute votre famille, pour vous témoigner l'envie que j'ai de vous servir" (II. ii). Similarly, Toinette, masquerading as the travelling physician in Le Malade Imaginaire, says to Argan, "Je voudrais, Monsieur, que vous eussiez toutes les maladies que je viens de dire, que vous fussiez abandonné de tous les médecins, désespéré, à l'agonie, pour vous montrer l'excellence de mes remèdes, et l'envie que j'aurais de vous rendre service" (III. x). Thus Sganarelle and Toinette express precisely the sentiments of Mme. de Bonnivet of Armance, to whom Octave confesses that he has no conscience. The news is received by that lady (not, of course, a priest or even a Catholic, but the standard-bearer of religion in the novel, and the type of Mme. de Fervaques in The Red and the Black), whose "imagination was occupied exclusively with God and the Angels," with an expression of spurious piety: "You distress me," said Madame de Bonnivet in a tone that revealed the keenest pleasure; "yours is precisely what we call the rebellious nature." ... A celebrated Doctor of the last century, summoned to the bedside of a great nobleman, his friend, after examining the symptoms of the disease, slowly and in silence, exclaimed in a sudden transport of joy: "Ah! Monsieur le Marquis, it is a disease that has been lost for centuries! Vitreous phlegm! A superb disease, absolutely fatal. Ah! I have discovered it, I have
discovered it!" Such was the joy of Madame de Bonnivet; it was in a sense the joy of an artist. 10

Indifference to the objectives of their professions is reflected further in the recklessness with which priest and physician dare to prescribe. Sganarelle glibly recommends a cheese to the peasant Thibaut for his wife's mortal illness. This "fromage préparé, où il entre de l'or, du corail, et des perles, et quantité d'autres choses précieuses" (III. ii) has all the invisible virtue of the communion elements. That and the prescriptions of Purgon and Diafoirus of The Imaginary Invalid, and those of the four physicians of L'Amour Médicin, prefigure the even colder-blooded prescriptions of the incredibly amoral Fabrizio, who, with no more thought than they to the welfare of those who will follow his advice, undertakes to preach. "'Try to speak for half an hour on religion,'" his aunt had advised him; "'you will utter heresies at first; but hire a learned and discreet theologian to help you with your sermons, and warn you of your mistakes, you can put them right the day after!'" (II, 297). His motive is incredibly bad, the seduction of Clelia, and out of it he prescribes the pity which "a generous soul ought to feel for one in misfortune, even when he is guilty" in order "to honor worthily the Madonna della Pietà, who, herself, had so greatly suffered when on

earth" (II, 300-301). Of course, it is not the madonna who will in fact be honored by the pity which the self-serving, self-aggrandizing Fabrizio recommends.

In adding to his other sins that of distorting and secularizing his congregation's religious impulse, bending it to glorify himself, Fabrizio reveals himself as a priest who impedes morality as effectively as any physician of Molière's ever impedes health. If morality is to religion what health is to medicine, then Fabrizio is like a physician who maliciously uses his office to spread sickness—which, by the way, it could be argued that Purgon does when he is wicked and hard-hearted enough to direct his malediction at a hypochondriac whose morbid state of mind could well make such an authoritative prophecy of death a self-fulfilling one.

The absence of a moral sense among Stendhal's priests creates an atmosphere in which such misuse of office becomes philosophically possible. In the case of Molière's physicians, there is some temptation to say that it is the absence of any other sense which makes them deficient in the moral one as well. But there is evidence of a deliberate effort on the part of the physicians to erect a machine of self-deception against the possibility of attack on moral grounds: Palmer has observed that Purgon directs his malediction against one who must surely be among the most lucrative of his patients, and does
so in what seems to be a genuine fit of righteous indignation; "he is
deaf to the appeals of his frenzied and profitable client." There
is very little that is admirable in Purgnon's passion, but the moral
climate in Stendhal is worse yet; there even the apology of self-
deception is often coldly dispatched. Particularly in The Charterhouse
of Parma, the moral question is not given enough consideration to
warrant self-deception. Here, for instance, is Stendhal's assess-
ment of Gina's state of mind upon learning that Fabrizio is about to
be poisoned:

She completely overlooked the moral reflexion which
would not have escaped a woman brought up in one of
those Northern religions which allow self-examination:
"I was the first to use poison, and I am perishing by
poison." In Italy reflexions of that sort, in moments
of passion, appear in the poorest of taste, as a pun
would seem in Paris in similar circumstances.
(II, 254)

Here as elsewhere it is icily evident that to Stendhal moral
interests are not superior to or independent of social ones, but are
meekly subservient to them; that morality is a social function, a func-
tion, in fact, of manners, not the reverse. There is some evidence
that rightly or wrongly Stendhal perceived a comparable attitude in
Molière's works, a point which, however, will be saved for discus-
sion in terms of the bourgeois gentleman; for the social pressures

\[11\] Palmer, Molière, pp. 424-25.
upon that type exaggerate and so (as Stendhal might put it) crystal-
ize the practicality of subordinating moral to social values.

The motivation for misuse of office among Stendhal's priests
as among Molière's physicians is a desire for wealth, power, and
women. Sganarelle says of medicine that he believes it is "le métier
le meilleur de tous; car, soit qu'on fasse bien ou soit qu'on fasse
mal, on est toujours payé de même sort" (III, ii). Such is obviously
the case with priests as well. Although he denies the financial inter-
est, it is clearly of paramount importance: after protesting to
Géronte at length that he will accept no money for his ministrations,
Sganarelle takes the coins offered him and asks, "Cela est-il du
poids?"

GÉRONTE. Oui, Monsieur.
SGANARELLE. Je ne suis pas un médecin mer-
cenaire.
GERONTE. Je le sais bien.
SGANARELLE. L'intérêt ne me gouverne point.
GÉRONTE. Je n'ai pas cette pensée. (II. iv)

For Julien Sorel and Fabrizio, the desire to operate on a gentlemanly
scale is the great determining factor in life.

One fine day Julien stopped talking about Napoleon;
he announced his intention of becoming a priest and was
to be seen constantly in his father's sawmill, busy memor-
izing the Latin Bible the curé had loaned him. That good
old man, marveling at his progress, spent whole evenings
teaching him theology. In his presence, Julien evinced
nothing but pious sentiments. Who could have guessed that
behind his girlish face, so pale and gentle, lay hidden the
most unshakable resolution to expose himself to a thousand deaths rather than fail to make his fortune!
(p. 33)

As to Fabrizio, the Conte does not "pretend to turn [him] into an exemplary priest, like so many that you see. No, he is a great gentleman, first and foremost; he can remain perfectly ignorant if it seems good to him, and will none the less become Bishop and Archbishop" (I, 144). Gina reassures him about his sacerdotal future.

"'There is no question whatever,'" she tells him, "'of your being a poor priest of more or less exemplary and virtuous life, like Priore Blanès'" (I, 146). Consequently Fabrizio does not acquire the virtues of the clergy any more than Julien does and to about the extent that Sganarelle acquires those of the medical profession. Their lack of scruple is most evident when all three use their privilege against women. First Sganarelle shamelessly uses his office to fondle Jacqueline:

SGANARELLE. Peste! le joli meuble que voilà!
Ah! Nourrice, charmante Nourrice, ma médecine est la très humble esclave de votre nourricerie, et je voudrais bien être le petit poupon fortuné qui têtât le lait (il lui porte la main sur le sein) de vos bonnes grâces. Tous mes remèdes, toute ma science, toute ma capacité est à votre service, et . . . (II. ii)

And, again,

SGANARELLE, en voulant toucher les tétons de la Nourrice. Mais comme je m'intéresse à toute votre famille, il faut que j'essaye un peu le lait de votre nourrice, et que je visite son sein.
LUCAS, le tirant, en lui faisant faire la pirouette.
Nanin, nanin; je n'avons que faire de ça.

SGANARELLE. C'est l'office du médecin de voir les tétons des nourrices. (II. iii)

Julien and, more blatantly, Fabrizio, use their priestly offices for comparable purposes. It is because he is a priest that Julien is admitted to the de Renal and La Mole households; and, when it suits him to do so, he does not scruple to use his priesthood to further his amorous causes. Immediately upon deciding that he must have Mme. de Renal ("'especially because it will allow me, if . . . someone should criticise me for having done such lowly work as tutoring, to imply that love brought me to such a pass'"), Julien turns his priestly office to use in capturing her imagination; he uses his profession to romanticize his passion. "'I must go,'" he sighs, "'for I love you passionately; that is a sin . . . and what a sin for a young priest!'" (p. 89). It is possibly the only consideration Julien ever bestows upon the celibacy of the clergy.

But it is Fabrizio who, in his blatant use of his pulpit to seduce Clelia, bears the more shocking resemblance to Sganarelle. He preaches only in order to make such a reputation for himself that Clelia will not be able to resist coming to hear him and will put herself among those who, in obedience to the theme of his sermons, take pity on the guilty unfortunate. When at last he sees her in his congregation, he begins his oration by reading a prayer which he has kept
tucked behind the pulpit especially for the occasion. "While he appeared to be addressing the public, he spoke only to the Marchesa" (II, 316). When finally this preacher of whom the Marchesa's friends declare that "'he beats even the best tenor in Italy'" receives a note from Clelia requesting that he meet her secretly, "'At last,'" he [cries], "'after fourteen months and eight days! Farewell to preaching'" (p. 317). The sole objective of his famous preaching career has been to accomplish a seduction.

When an author sanctions the immorality of his characters, the effect is terrifying because it means that the laws of his universe are not moral laws, and suggests by analogy that the laws of our universe are also not moral. Chiefly because it so evidently has Stendhal's sanction, Fabrizio's perversion of his pulpit is more horrifying than any comparable perversions of the medical arts in Molière. Stendhal's consent clearly derives in no small part from the fact that Fabrizio is his alter-ego (as Krutch has remarked of Julien, "more perfectly Stendhalian than Stendhal himself");12 it is uncomfortably clear, particularly in Fabrizio's preaching experience, that through him Stendhal is enjoying the literary realization of an adolescent fantasy—a fantasy to which Stendhal surrenders himself so completely.

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that Fabrizio's church becomes soggy with unedited tears. Indeed, in the rapture of his self-aggrandizement through the virtually unmitigated success of Fabrizio the preacher, Stendhal even forgets his redeeming disdain of the church.

If he had participated less in Fabrizio's ambitions, Stendhal would have written more satire into them. His lack of self-restraint produced instead a rather embarrassing melodrama. He sets Fabrizio up in circumstances designed solely to enhance him in feminine eyes—to make him, according to Stendhal's tastes, at least, irresistible, and then to vaunt his desirability. What he later terms "the famous sermon preached with the lighted candles" (p. 317) must have been highly gratifying in the writing to the daydreaming Stendhal:

On entering the pulpit, Fabrizio was agreeably surprised to find all the chairs occupied by young men of fashion, and by people of the highest distinction. A few words of excuse began his sermon, and were received with suppressed cries of admiration. . . . The orator was greatly moved; there were moments when he could barely pronounce his words so as to be heard in every part of this small church. In the eyes of all the women, and of a good many of the men, he had himself the air of the wretch whom one ought to pity, so extreme was his pallor. A few minutes after the words of apology with which he had begun his discourse, it was noticed that he was not in his normal state; it was felt that his melancholy, this evening, was more profound and more tender than usual. Once he was seen to have tears in his eyes; in a moment there rose through the congregation a general sob, so loud that the sermon was completely interrupted. (II, 301)
What there was to provoke "suppressed cries of admiration" in the excuses offered by a preacher for his tardiness, and particularly for a tardiness resulting from his proclivity for spying on married ladies at the opera, is unfortunately left to the imagination. Tenderly and solicitously Stendhal sets the stage to no other purpose than that Fabrizio, in the presence of a suitably elite audience, may display upon it his inestimable perfections, chief among which is the abundance of passion which he is capable of sustaining and which the rest of the city, having nothing better to do (in fact, having no other reason to exist), congregates cooperatively to adore. To continue:

This first interruption was followed by a dozen others; his listeners uttered cries of admiration, there were outbursts of tears; one heard at every moment such exclamations as: "Ah! Santa Madonna!" "Ah! Gran Dio!" The emotion was so general and so irrepressible in this select public, that no one was ashamed of uttering these cries. . . .

During [a short recess in the sermon] a great clamour was suddenly heard proceeding from the church; it was the faithful who were voting a statue to the Signor Coadiutore [italics mine]. His success in the second part of the discourse was so wild and worldly, the bursts of Christian contrition gave place so completely to cries of admiration that were altogether profane, that he felt it his duty to address, on leaving the pulpit, a sort of reprimand to his hearers. Whereupon they all left at once with a movement that was singularly formal; and, on reaching the street, all began to applaud with frenzy, and to shout: "Evviva del Dongo!" (II, 301-302)
One might wish that Stendhal had identified the scruple which, in the absence of the worldly response which Fabrizio seeks from Clelia, charges him to reprimand the one which he receives from his congregation. He has, in effect, caught the wrong fish. It is interesting indeed that this alter-ego of Stendhal's finds it easier to seduce a whole city than a single marchesa.

In order to protract the titillation Stendhal postpones Clelia's capitulation. In the meantime, rather than waste Fabrizio's excellence, his creator provides him with the passionate admiration of Annetta Marini, whose "magnificent eyes were drowned in tears at the ninth or tenth sentence" of Fabrizio's sermons (II, 303). She commissions "a magnificent portrait of Fabrizio del Dongo, set in the finest frame that had been gilded in Parma in the last twenty years" (II, 305). Finally, having even offered the romantic inducement that Fabrizio's "'lungs are affected'" (p. 314 and again p. 315), Stendhal brings the lovers together. He sets Clelia up almost as shamelessly as he does Fabrizio, in "a magnificent gilt armchair" provided by Gonzo, who, for good measure, "inasmuch as it was a signal honor to be seen in the company of so great a lady, had put on his French coat with his sword. . . . One may imagine how the poor Marchesa felt when she saw this armchair, which had been placed directly opposite the pulpit" (II, 315-16). The height, then,
of Fabrizio's preaching career is this confrontation, when he and his mistress are on public display in the gaudiest manner possible.

Fabrizio has shamelessly arranged for Clelia to admire him for possessing abundantly a passionate holiness which in fact he possesses less than the meanest sinner in his congregation. He elicits her love for qualities which he not only lacks but lacks egregiously. He has his will of her, and indeed of himself: he looks grand. But that his actual grandeur is in inverse proportion to its appearance is a drawback which is evidently of no concern to either Fabrizio or to Stendhal. Neither is dissatisfied with the quality of the victory.

The great difference between Fabrizio's wickedness and that of Sganarelle, Purgon, Diafoirus, and the infamous physicians of L'Amour Médecin is that Stendhal forgets himself; Molière, never. It is in abandoning himself to the amoral universe of the daydream, in which one's own will is the only right, that Stendhal becomes immeasurably more reprehensible than Molière. Morality (not to mention good taste) exists in terms of other people; we cannot be moral or immoral except in terms of other people. Since in daydreams other people do not really exist, or have at best a shadowy existence, daydreams cannot be judged on a moral level. In daydreams, other people (people in the category of Fabrizio's congregation, which exists only to further his ends, or of Giletti, who exists only to be killed by
him), are only props. They need not be answered or accounted for. They exist only for the convenience of the central actors. But serious fiction ordinarily operates on the assumption that the universe which it describes is real, significant, and subject to moral judgment. Neither people nor their values can be lawlessly ignored. And when the morality of the daydream is carried over into serious fiction (i.e., when serious fiction ignores the concept of other people in order to pay court to the vanity of either hero or author), it must be judged as if it had been carried over into life. It is for this reason that Stendhal is chilling and The Charterhouse of Parma is an astonishing, appalling work.

Both Molière's physicians and Stendhal's priests, then, use their offices as wickedly as they are able; they are motivated strictly by their own interests. They are alike in that Stendhal's priests are as dangerous to spiritual health as Molière's physicians to physical health. But Molière's physicians are immoral and Stendhal's priests are essentially amoral because Molière, the god of his literary universe, has a conscience, which Stendhal, the god of his, has not, and because Molière, even in the comic form, plays by conventional rules: that is, he assumes the reality, significance, and susceptibility to moral judgment of the world of his play. If his physicians do not pause to take cognizance of their own wickedness, it is
because the comic form does not permit them to; the tragic hero is "eager to learn the truth about himself, bad as it may be, but the comic hero avoids it strenuously and persists in building illusions about himself."13 But where a character's recognition of his foibles is obstructed by the genre, the playwright's laughter supplies the awareness requisite to a moral universe; it is the alternative to tragic recognition. When Sganarelle has prescribed his cheese for the dying wife of Thibaut, and adds to his prescription the advice to bury her if it doesn't work, we hear Molière's recognition of evil.

I have said that Molière judges his physicians and he judges them harshly. When he addresses himself to the question of whether medical men have a science, he concludes at once that they have not: "Les ressorts de notre machine," says Béralde,

\[
\text{... sont des mystères, jusqu'ici, où les hommes ne voient goutte, et... la nature nous a mis au-devant des yeux des voiles trop épais pour y connaître quelque chose.}
\]

ARGAN. Les médecins ne savent donc rien, à votre compte?

BÉRALDE. Si fait, mon frère. Ils savent la plupart de fort belles humanités, savent parler en beau latin, savent nommer en grec toutes les maladies, les définir et les diviser; mais, pour ce qui est de les guérir, c'est ce qu'ils ne savent point du tout. (III. iii)

Having decided that medical men have no science, Molière then

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proceeds to ponder the point discussed above, whether they deceive others only or are themselves deceived as to the value of their profession. While admitting that "il y en a parmi eux qui sont eux-mêmes dans l'erreur populaire, dont ils profitent, et d'autres qui en profitent sans y être," it is the deluded physician whom Béralde stresses, painting a picture of Purgon's passion: "Il ne fera, en vous tuant, que ce qu'il a fait à sa femme et à ses enfants, et ce qu'en un besoin il ferait à lui-même" (III. iii).

It has been pointed out on the preceding pages that Stendhal does not always judge his clergymen, and that this lack of judgment contributes significantly to the amoral climate of his works. When he does judge them, however—which he does when they are not acting as his alter-ego or when they are at odds with his own interests—he too judges harshly. He is very hard, for instance, on Archbishop Landriani, whom Gina praises as "'virtue incarnate,'" who "'would undergo martyrdom like Polyeuctus in the opera'" (p. 164). Bishop Landriani, Stendhal informs us, "'was born on his knees before the nobility. . . . As soon as he enters the Sovereign's, or even the Prime Minister's presence, he is dazzled by the sight of such greatness, he becomes confused, he begins to blush; it is physically impossible for him to say no. This accounts for the things he has done" (I, 164-65). He is hard also on the Bishop of Agde,
however polite and handsome he makes him; for he lets Julien catch
him rehearsing his benedictions before a mirror.

Stendhal believed in the science of priests no more than
Molière in the science of physicians; although he confessed that he
was moved by religious ceremony, he despised religion heartily.
But, as Molière concluded that medical men can deceive themselves
about the state of their art, Stendhal concluded that priests can do
the same. Father Chélan, whose confidence in his vocation is
enough in itself to manufacture the existence of one, is an example.
He is the most religious of Stendhal's priests and the best of them.
"If you have any thought to currying favor with men in power," he
says to Julien,

your eternal damnation is assured. You may
make a fortune, but you will be obliged to do it at the
expense of the indigent, flatter the subprefect, the
mayor, the man of consequence, and serve his interests,
This course, which is called knowing how to get along
in the world, may not be absolutely incompatible with
salvation for a layman, but in our profession one is forced
to make a choice: either to lay up treasures in this world
or the next. . . . To my sorrow, I have caught a glimpse
in the depths of your character of a dark passion, which
does not promise the moderation and complete abnega-
tion of things worldly that are essential to a priest.
(pp. 53-54)

14 Stendhal, The Life of Henri Brulard, translated by Jean
Although neither the priestly nor the medical profession is supported by a real science, both priests and physicians may believe sincerely in the bogus sciences which they profess. But from this similarity arises a difference, for Stendhal respects the self-deception of the priest more than Molière respects that of the medical man. This, no doubt, is why Molière does not depict any good physicians whereas Stendhal depicts a number of good priests. The disparity between their attitudes toward the two beleaguered professions is probably the result of a realistic assessment of the effort which a physician on the one hand and a priest on the other must make to delude himself. The medical man must work harder to believe in himself than the religious man must work to believe in God. The greater slipperiness of the religious question makes it easier for a man, more especially for one of good will, to be deceived. But the intellectual ignominy of the physician who believes in his own powers, when their contradiction is lying dead under his nose, compounds his moral obloquy.

Therefore, although Stendhal's clergymen are in many ways worse than Molière's physicians, Stendhal himself in assessing their morality is more lenient than Molière in assessing that of the medical profession; for Stendhal believed that a man might take his virtues with him even into the priesthood. A second reason for Stendhal's
greater tolerance may be the discrepancy between the amounts of mischief which priest and physician can bring about. Molière perceived his physicians as offering a real threat to the body, but Stendhal hardly perceived in priests a comparable threat to a soul which he considered non-existent. Thirdly, Stendhal was less interested in religion than Molière was in medicine. Molière, particularly during the composition of *Le Malade Imaginaire*, was a sick man; he was a dying man, and he had reason to be critical of his physicians. When Molière wrote about medical men, he was writing about medicine. But when Stendhal wrote about priests, he was not writing about religion. Stendhal's interest in priestcraft was akin to his interest in politics and surreptitious love affairs: it was inspired by his love of situations involving romance, drama, danger, cloak and dagger. Stendhal, in short, was fond of setting his heroes on obstacle courses, and the church provided an excellent one. Hence much of his interest in it.

The lighter moral judgment is probably as predictable from the less moral as from the less involved man. Stendhal's suspension of judgment in the face of convenience, or in the wake of a daydream, indicates that he is exactly that, less moral than Molière. And it is his suspension of judgment which makes the amorality of his priests immeasurably more chilling than the immorality of the
physicians whom Molière treats with so much more deliberate severity.
CHAPTER II

THE HYPOCRITE: JULIEN AND TARTUFFE

Twice in *The Red and the Black*, Stendhal establishes a parallel between Julien Sorel and Tartuffe. When Julien must confront the enraged Marquis de La Mole to answer for his seduction of Mathilde, "the answer was," we are informed, "supplied by the role of Tartuffe." In the words of that villain Julien accounts for himself, saying "'I am no angel'" (p. 435). Then, anticipating the wrath which Abbé Pirard will expend on him when he learns the part Julien has played, he again resorts to the type of all hypocrites: "The spirit of Tartuffe came to [his] rescue: 'Very well, I will go and confess myself to him'" (p. 437).

Surprisingly little criticism has attempted to establish a consistent identification of Julien with Tartuffe. A significant contribution has however been made by Thibaudet, who argues that the scene in which Julien takes Mme. de Rênal's hand in the garden at Vergy, representing as it does an "attaque directe," reproduces the scene in which Tartuffe puts his hand on Elmire's knee; and that Mathilde's invitation to Julien to come to her room reproduces
Elmire's invitation to Tartuffe, for like him Julien suspects a trap. More controversially, Thibaudet also suggests that the dénouement of The Red and the Black reproduces that of Tartuffe, in that like Samson betrayed by Delilah, both Julien, betrayed by Mme. de Rênal, and Tartuffe, betrayed by Elmire, attempt to bring down the houses that have confounded them, even though they must destroy themselves in the process. 1

The basic situational similarities between the works are incontrovertible. In each case an unprincipled parvenu, a religious hypocrite, gains access to a household, rises in it through his hypocrisy, betrays his benefactor, and comes to grief through the mismanagement of an affair with a woman of the house; in each case he might have saved himself but failed to do so and was, in fact, directly responsible for his own downfall. Other parallels occur between the secondary characters de Rênal and Orgon, Valenod and Damis, and Fouqué and Valère.

Both Orgon and de Rênal are wonderfully gullible. Having taken controversial men into their houses, they are determined to trust them regardless of an abundance of evidence that they should not do so. Nor can good nature account for the credulity of either; on the contrary, Orgon is profoundly irascible and de Rênal is petty.

Each has an interest in maintaining confidence in his protégé and each cooperates actively in his own deception. Orgon's interest is to appease heaven by distinguishing so holy a man: "'Enfin le Ciel chez moi me le fit retirer, /Et depuis ce temps-là tout semble y prosperer" (I. v). Orgon's whole treatment of Tartuffe is egoistic in that it constitutes a kind of interested self-mortification. Like a self-deprecating nun carrying bedpans for the Lord, Orgon manages to tolerate Tartuffe's rather disgusting physical processes.

A table, au plus haut bout il veut qu'il soit assis;  
Avec joie il l'y voit manger autant que six;  
Les bons morceaux de tout, il fait qu'on les lui cede;  
Et s'il vient à rote, il lui dit: "Dieu vous aide!"  
(I. iii)

In the same vein he recommends to Mariane that she mortify her flesh by marrying Tartuffe (IV. iii). And to deepen the abasement of the entire family, he permits even Tartuffe's valet to take incredible liberties with them:

Il n'est pas jusqu'au fat qui lui sert de garçon  
Qui ne se mêle aussi de nous faire leçon;  
Il vient nous sermonner avec des yeux farouches,  
Et jeter nos rubans, notre rouge et nos mouches.  
Le traître, l'autre jour, nous rompit de ses mains  
Un mouchoir qu'il trouva dans une Fleur des Saints,  
Disant que nous mêlions, par un crime effroyable,  
Avec la sainteté les parures du diable.  
(I. iii)

Certainly Dorine's lectures to Orgon are not to be compared with such impertinence. Orgon's unapologetic dismissal of the simplest,
most inescapable logic concerning Tartuffe's motives also smacks of an exercise in piety: he enjoys mortifying his intellectual faculties as much as his physical senses and his pride. He is not the first religionist, literary or otherwise, to make to religion a voluntary sacrifice of his intelligence.

De Rênal is not worried about his soul or the wrath or pleasure of heaven, but he is greatly interested in believing in Julien because by doing so he will not have to choose between his honor and his wife's fortune. So he, like Orgon, "pour mieux braver l'éclat des mauvais jugements" (IV. v), is willing to leave his wife in the company of the tutor. "'I could thrash that insolent tutor and kick him out; but what a stir that would make, not only in Verrières but all over the department'" (p. 135). It is Mme. de Rênal, not her husband, who arranges for Julien to leave Vergy for a stay in Verrières; de Rênal's own contribution to Julien's removal is only an ill-tempered reservation--"'I shall certainly not grant you more than a week'" (p. 143). Moreover, still in the interests of maintaining public opinion, "'M. de Rênal... ordered Julien to live in his house'" (p. 44) once in Verrières. There his wife has an easy access to her lover when she makes a trip into town. Apparently feeling no necessity to hide from the mayor, "Julien... offered her his arm to go from one shop to another and little by little it drew
them toward Fidelity Drive, where they spent several hours almost as peacefully as at Vergy" (p. 154).

When Julien leaves for the seminary, refusing at the last minute to allow de Rêna! to pay his tuition, his decision inspires such enthusiasm on the part of the mayor that he is, in his new ardor, again like Orgon: "M. de Rênal hugged him with tears in his eyes. Julien had asked him for a letter of reference, and in his enthusiasm he couldn't find terms magnificent enough to praise his conduct" (p. 166). And Orgon's attack on Tartuffe when the latter brings the police ("Traître, tu me gardais ce trait pour dernier; / C'est le coup, scélérat, par où tu m'expédies, / Et voilà couronner toutes tes perfidies" [V. vii]) must be comparable to de Rênal's probable reaction when Julien shoots his wife after the mayor's apt handling of the scandal has removed any reason for him to wish dead that woman to whom he has grown so accustomed: "'She knows all about my business affairs. If I were free to marry tomorrow, I couldn't replace her'" (p. 134).

There is another level upon which de Rênal and Orgon can be compared. Gossman has discovered in Molière a motif in which

... the hero may choose an idol whom he uses as the instrument of his superiority to the world, for whom he loudly proclaims his admiration and for whom he demands the admiration of others. ... In this type of situation the hero is confounded the moment his
'instrument' expresses and reveals his independence. . . . Orgon is confounded when Tartuffe turns out to have desires of his own and to be other than Orgon took him to be. . . . Tartuffe desires not to do Orgon's will but to possess his wife, and he is discovered to be no saintly man but a vile intriguer.²

Similarly de Rênal and La Mole both take pride in Julien-de Rênal because he has a tutor of some reputation, La Mole because he has in his retinue a man of singular ability. The marquis is vain enough about this acquisition to indulge in the eccentricity of granting Julien the cross for which Mathilde objects that her 'brother has been asking . . . for the last eighteen months, and he is a La Mole! . . . .' 'Yes, but Julien offers the unexpected; this has never been the case of the La Mole in question'" (pp. 285-86), replies the marquis with evident satisfaction. Like Orgon, de Rênal and La Mole are consequently confounded when Julien turns out to be his own man, to have desires of his own, and to be other than they took him to be. Like Tartuffe, he does not wish to do their will but to possess the one's wife and the other's daughter; and he is discovered to be no simpering little priest, no harmless bourgeois wit, but a significant threat to social, not to mention domestic, order.

There is also an interesting similarity between the men who inform to Orgon and de Rênal. Of course Damis is a good

character and Valenod an evil one, and Damis informs to a father
whom he loves while Valenod informs to a rival whom he hates. But
they are alike in that Valenod acts out of hostility toward Julien and
frustrated desire for Mme. de Rênal, while Damis acts out of hostility
toward Tartuffe and frustrated desire for Valère's sister. When
Damis announces to Elmire that heaven's favor has led him to learn
the truth

Pour confondre l'orgueil d'un traître qui me nuit,
Pour m'ouvrir une voie à prendre la vengeance
De son hypocrisie et de son insolence,
(III. iv)

he is stating precisely Valenod's position toward both Julien and de
Rênal. For Valenod hopes in writing his letter to confound the
pride of Julien, who has won Mme. de Rênal, and of her husband,
who possesses the mayoralty which he also covets, and thereby to
avenge himself on the hypocrisy and insolence of the social aristocrat
on the one hand and the intellectual aristocrat on the other.

It is principally in their loyalty that Valère and Fouqué are
alike. Fouqué makes Julien the offer of a partnership which Julien
refuses, because he thinks he can do better. Valère makes Orgon
the offer of a marriage to his daughter, which Orgon also refuses and
for the same reason. But Fouqué's loyalty, like Valère's, remains
constant, so that Julien, having renounced Fouqué's life-style in
favor of that of a gentleman in Paris, in the end finds himself
reflecting on the truth that it is Fouqué, not "those handsome young men . . . at the Hôtel de La Mole who read René," who is willing to make sacrifices for him (p. 461). Similarly it is Valère, whom Orgon had renounced in favor of Tartuffe, who comes to that unfortunate gentleman's rescue. Moreover, Fouqué and Valère express their loyalty in much the same way. When worst comes to worst, Fouqué tries to help Julien as Valère tries to help Orgon, by coming at once to his side and there recommending flight and making it possible with an offer of money. And: both show that their loyalty is not conditional. "J'ignore le détail du crime qu'on vous donne," Valère says to Orgon, (V. vi) and his carriage is waiting confidently at the door to effect Orgon's rescue. Thus he demonstrates the same fine indifference that Fouqué has to what Julien has done: in the prison cell

talked to him for a long time about M. de Lavalette's escape.

"You have hurt my feelings," Julien said to him.
"M. de Lavalette was innocent, I am guilty; unintentionally, you have reminded me of the difference." (p. 461)

To Fouqué it is clearly a difference which makes no difference.

Finally Valère declares to Orgon, "je m'offre pour . . . / . . . accompagner j'usqu'au bout votre fuite" (V. vi) and Fouqué does precisely as much for Julien; he is still there when Mathilde buries his head in the cave.
More important, however, are the similarities between Julien and Tartuffe themselves. These are made explicit in the description of Julien which Mme. de Rénal writes to the Marquis de La Mole:

Poor and covetous, it was by means of the most consummate hypocrisy and through the seduction of a weak, unhappy woman that that man sought to further himself and become somebody. It is part of my painful duty to add that I am forced to think that Monsieur J. has no religious principles whatever. In all good conscience, I am constrained to believe that one of his methods for getting on in a household is to attempt to seduce the woman who has the most influence in it. Clothed in an appearance of disinterestedness and with phrases taken from novels, his great and sole object is to gain control over the master of the house and his fortune. (p. 450)

"La figure de Julien," says Thibaudet, "est exactement celle de Tartuffe: un hypocrite qui s'introduit dans les maisons pour faire fortune en convoitant la femme et en épousant la fille. M. de la Mole a sa loge aux Français: il a compris." 3

One of the most damaging characteristics which Julien shares with Tartuffe is his ingratitude. When Orgon discovers Tartuffe's perfidy, he exclaims,

Quoi! sous un beau semblant de ferveur si touchante
Cacher un coeur si double, une âme si méchante!
Et moi qui l'ai reçu gueusant et n'ayant rien . . .
(V. i)

3 Thibaudet, Stendhal, p. 121.
A similar reflection, accompanied by as much righteous indignation, inspires the question which the marquis puts to Julien: "'Ah, sir, is this what I should have expected?" (p. 441). For in his effort to make Julien's life turn out well, the marquis has made it possible for Julien to destroy him. Again the marquis' indignation rests on precisely the same ground as Orgon's:

Il m'ose menacer de mes propres bienfaits,
Et veut, à ma ruine, user des avantages
Dont le viennent d'armer mes bontés trop peu sages,
Me chasser de mes biens, où je l'ai transféré.
(V. iii)

Julien, of course, unlike Tartuffe, is mindful of his debt; the ingratitude which allowed him to seduce his benefactor's daughter in no way inhibits his impulse to give the marquis a suicide note. But Julien's scruples are too selective to warrant anyone's arguing with his prediction that "'the academician will say that [the marquis] has warmed a serpent in his bosom'" (p. 465). The academician's metaphor applies quite as well to Orgon as to de Rénal. And the question which Damis puts to Orgon could have been put to the marquis just as well by his son Norbert:

Quoi? mon père, est-il vrai qu'un coquin vous menace?
Qu'il n'est point de bienfait qu'en son âme il n'efface,
Et que son lâche orgueil, trop digne de courroux,
Se fait de vos bontés des armes contre vous?
(V. ii)
Like Tartuffe's, Julien's interest in religion is outrageously mercenary. The profit motive is explicit in all the sanctimonious posturing of both. Note the parallel between Dorine's remark that Tartuffe,

... qui connaît sa dupe et qui veut en jouir,
Par cent dehors fardés à l'art de l'éblouir;
Son cagotisme en tire à toute heure des sommes,
(I. iii)

and Julien's musings on the relationship between religion and business: "I will be selling a place in heaven to the faithful. How shall this place be made visible to them? By the difference between my outward appearance and that of a layman" (p. 187). Julien intends his conspicuous holiness to pay him in cash, just as Tartuffe intends his even more conspicuous holiness to make heaven visible to Orgon.

It is not only their lack of assorted scruples but also their aggressiveness which makes Julien and Tartuffe alike. Julien's major symbol is the bird of prey which sweeps overhead when he is at the cave on his way to visit Fouqué. As Julien coldly singles Mme. de Rénal, Mathilde, and Mme. de Fervaques out for his victims, so his counterpart focuses a wonderfully sharp eye on Orgon and then Elmire, and dives after them with unerring singleness of purpose. The image of a bird of prey is in fact even more appropriate to Tartuffe than to Julien. For although Mme. Derville once remarks of Julien that he "never acts without a motive" (p. 91), the
truth is that even Julien wastes some movements. When he falls deeply enough in love, he can forget his ambition, even the lively prospect that he may be made a bishop; "to his eyes all of those momentous concerns were as if covered with a veil. His imagination was no longer capable of perceiving them, except vaguely and, so to speak, in the distance" (p. 402). And his rage at Mme. de Rênal's letter blinds him to the great possibilities which are open to him if he marries Mathilde. Tartuffe, on the other hand, never wavers. It is he who always acts with purpose, even in taking the chance of seducing Elmire; for he is as sensual as he is greedy, so that he perceives whatever minimal risk he takes as worthwhile. It is imprecise to think that he is sidetracked into seduction, as Julien is in a sense sidetracked into shooting Mme. de Rênal.

Again in dealing with Mme. de Fervaques (who, incidentally, bears a marked resemblance to those "prudes sauvages" whom Elmire has occasion to derogate as possessing an honor "armé de griffes et de dents" [IV. iii]), Julien has something in common with Tartuffe; for in order to gain the devotion of that lady, he writes her letters which are as pious as Tartuffe's avowals to Elmire, if considerably subtler; neither of these religious hypocrites hesitates to undermine the virtue of a lady by talking to her of piety. Fabrizio's
the wooing of Clelia from his pulpit, discussed at length above, is a later and more exaggerated version of the same tactic.

Julien also has in common with Tartuffe his willingness to punish himself in order to perfect his hypocrisy. Tartuffe makes his grand entrance saying, "Laurent, serrez ma haire avec ma discipline" (III. ii). Although he may be speaking only for immediate effect, since he has just spied Dorine, the possibility exists that Tartuffe may actually have been inflicting physical punishment on himself in order to act out his pretensions the better. The punishment which Julien inflicts on himself is to bind his arm to his chest for two months to atone for betraying his admiration for Napoleon (p. 34). The self-punishment of both men is an exercise in hypocrisy; the only significant difference is that Tartuffe's self-mortification is an accomplishment in hypocrisy and Julien's is a lesson in it. Julien's act is motivated by hypocrisy, but it is not precisely hypocritical in itself.

It is, of course, in this matter of their hypocrisy that it is most profitable to compare Julien with Tartuffe. Neither is any sooner introduced to us than he makes a display of his most distinguishing characteristic, Tartuffe with his magnificent opening lines about his flagellator, his hair shirt, and Dorine's bosom, and Julien with the visit which he makes to the church, having "judged that it
would further the ends of his hypocrisy to stop [there] a while" (p. 32). As Mme. de Rénal painted a picture of Tartuffe in her description of Julien, so Cléante paints a picture of Julien in his description of Tartuffe:

Aussi ne vois-je rien qui soit plus odieux
Que le dehors plâtré d'un zèle spécieux,
Que ces francs charlatans, que ces dévots de place,
De qui la sacrilège et trompeuse grimace
Abuse impunément et se joue à leur gré
De ce qu'ont les mortels de plus saint et sacré,
Ces gens qui, par une âme à l'intérêt soumise,
Font de dévotion métier et marchandise,
Et veulent acheter crédit et dignités
A prix de faux clins d'yeux et d'éclans affectés,
Ces gens, dis-je, qu'on voit d'une ardeur non commune
Par le chemin du Ciel courir à leur fortune,
Qui, brûlants et priants, demandent chaque jour,
Et prêchent la retraite au milieu de la cour,
Qui savent ajuster leur zèle avec leurs vices,
Sont prompts, vindicatifs, sans foi, pleins d'artifices.

(I.v)

This is especially like Julien when he is busily making a home for himself in Verrières by reciting the New Testament at dinner parties.

The fact that Julien is so much more attractive than Tartuffe inclines us to minimize the extent of his hypocrisy. Thibaudet is tempted into the remark that "Julien, qui, sous l'uniforme noir, sait dissimuler comme Tartuffe, n'est pas plus un vrai hypocrite que, sous l'uniforme rouge, un militaire qui tue n'est un assassin. Tous dissimulent et tuent. Mais, l'essentiel est le style. . . ."4 Such

4Ibid., p. 122.
a remark raises the question of what, then, constitutes a real hypocrite. The highly debatable implication is that to be real, hypocrisy must be a learned rather than a natural trait; that to be a hypocrite, one must enjoy his hypocrisy. Additionally, Thibaudet's comparison of the priest who lies and the soldier who kills would appear to be flawed; for the fact that a soldier is not a murderer despite the fact that he kills results not from the style with which he kills but rather from society's agreement that it is the duty of a soldier to kill. Society has never agreed that it is the duty of a priest to lie.

The truth is that Julien is no whit less a hypocrite than the dreadful priest who stands outside his cell in the rain praying for his salvation "in order to make a reputation for himself" (p. 494). It is for precisely such a purpose, after all, that Julien himself memorized the Testament. There is, of course, a wide difference between Julien and this obnoxious priest; Julien remarks that difference when he observes that "'In Paris, I wouldn't be subjected to all these harassments. There, the charlatanism is more subtle'" (pp. 494-95). The difference between subtle and obvious charlatanism is, indeed, a difference in style. But style does not divide real hypocrites from false hypocrites. What it does do is divide agreeable hypocrites from disagreeable ones.
The lesson seems to be that hypocrisy can be admirable when it is well conceived and well executed; it is admirable when it is successful. It is however successful only if it goes undetected by those toward whom it is directed. Hence Julien despises the pieties of the seminarians, and the young men of the Hôtel de la Mole despise him for his "priestly look: meek and hypocritical" (p. 316). But it is rarely that Julien errs so. Ordinarily he does not practice hypocrisy upon those who can recognize what he is up to; and he does not even practice it before such discerning people except when they will be predisposed to admire it; Mathilde, for instance, when she hears him declaiming for the benefit of Mme. de Fervaques.

What astonished her most was his perfect falseness; he never said a word to the widow but it was a lie, or at least an abominable disguise for his true opinion, which Mathilde knew perfectly well on almost every subject. His Machiavellianism impressed her. "Such depth!" she would tell herself. "What a difference between him and the pompous boobies or common crooks, such as M. Tanbeau, who talk the same language!" (p. 414)

In Verrières Julien had been able to indulge in wildly hypocritical flights before the subprefect M. de Maugiron, who had come to offer him a position as tutor to Valenod's children:

Now it was Julien's turn to speak; he had been waiting impatiently for an hour and a half. His answer was perfect and, more important, long as a pastoral letter; it let everything be understood yet said nothing clearly. It was filled with respect for M. de Rénal, veneration
for the public of Verrières, and gratitude for the illustrious subprefect. This subprefect, amazed to come across someone more Jesuitical than himself, tried in vain to get a precise statement. Delighted, Julien jumped at this opportunity to practice, and began his answer all over again in other terms. (p. 145)

The reader, too, is in the category of people inclined to admire Julien's hypocrisy. For one thing, of course, his hypocrisy has certain admirable elements which distinguish it from Tartuffian hypocrisy; these will be examined later. For another, we identify with Julien and thus with his attempt to deceive others who deserve to be deceived. In the case of Tartuffe, however, we identify with those upon whom deception is practiced. Hence we see Tartuffe's hypocrisy as a cheat while we tend to see Julien's as a tool.

Although they are both hypocrites, clearly Tartuffe's hypocrisy differs from Julien's. In the first place, it comes easier to him: he practices it with all the people all the time, even when it would be to his advantage not to. For, a man of no taste himself, Tartuffe cannot distinguish between people of taste (Elmire and Cléante) and people of no taste (Orgon and Mme. Pernelle). Instead of saving his hypocrisy for the occasions upon which it will do him the most good, he uses it indiscriminately, behaving with clever people just as he behaves with stupid ones. Consequently he disgusts more people than he impresses. But while Tartuffe never quits scheming, Julien sometimes does; he stops his lying and abandons his
hypocrisy when he sees that it will serve him better to do so. When Pirard, for example, tells Julien that he has been made assistant master at the seminary, "Julien seriously considered going down on his knees and thanking God; but he gave in to a more genuine impulse. He walked over to the Abbé Pirard and took his hand, which he raised to his lips" (p. 202). Again with the Bishop of Besançon, Julien decides to drop the hypocrisy of pretending an ignorance of the humanities: "'I have nothing to lose; let's try to shine!'" (p. 211).

Occasionally, too, it is his instincts rather than his calculations which cause him to be himself. The most felicitous example occurs when he finds himself an unwelcome visitor in Mme. de Renal's room at two o'clock in the morning.

"Wretch!" she cried. There was a moment of confusion. Julien forgot his useless plan and reverted to his natural self. Not to find favor in the eyes of such a lovely woman seemed to him the worst of misfortunes. His only answer to her reproaches was to throw himself at her feet and clasp her knees. Since she said some very harsh things to him, he burst into tears.

He was in fact obliged to the love he had inspired, and the unexpected impression her seductive charms had made on him, for a conquest that all his clumsy maneuvering could never have brought off. (p. 95)

But Tartuffe cannot avoid being devious even when it would be to his advantage to be straightforward. If his attempt to seduce Elmire had augured as well as it in fact augured ill, it would have been defeated nevertheless by the shameless hypocrisy with which,
equating his lust for his patron's wife with love for God, he presses
his suit:

. . . je n'ai pu vous voir, parfaite créature,
Sans admirer en vous l'auteur de la nature,
Et d'une ardente amour sentir mon coeur atteint,
Au plus beau des portraits où lui-même il s'est peint.
(III. iii)

Tartuffe, in short, lacks the discrimination which directs Julien, a
man of taste. Julien uses his hypocrisy sparingly, not mechanisti-
cally, because it is distasteful to him. In order to practice it he
must consciously and aggressively overcome his repulsion. "'Man's
will is powerful,'" he says to himself; "'I read that everywhere;
but is it strong enough to rise above disgust like mine?'" (p. 191).
He despairs over "'how immensely difficult it is to keep up this
hypocrisy every minute! Hercules' labors were nothing by compari-
son!" (pp. 185-86).

Julien also differs from Tartuffe in that the latter will
accept any advantage from his hypocrisy; Julien will not. Tartuffe
accepts an advantage over his benefactor's wife, his son, and his
property. Julien, on the other hand, will accept only a sexual advan-
tage; he refuses any over Count Norbert ("'Certainly, I would never
fire on my benefactor's son'" [p. 437]), as he refuses one over de
Réna l's property—he will not accept payment of his tuition at Besan-
çon. Additionally, in leaving a suicide note with the marquis, he
effectively offers to resign wholesale everything which he has won from him.

There is, of course, a moral distinction between Julien and Tartuffe. Here again, however, Julien's morality is not conventional. It is taste more than virtue which accounts for the discrepancy between Tartuffe's willingness and Julien's unwillingness to play his whole hand. Seduction may be immoral, but it is almost never impolite, and so Julien does not object to accomplishing it. Similarly it is not the immorality of killing Norbert which would prevent Julien from dueling with him; it is the impoliteness of such a course—for while it is not in poor taste to seduce the daughter of one's benefactor, it is certainly in poor taste to kill his son.

Julien's morality, then—his duty, if you will, which Thibaudet finds to be the essential difference between Julien's hypocrisy and "low" hypocrisy,⁵ is largely a function of good taste. When conventional morality would be in poor taste, morality suffers. There is, however, something internalized about this taste which constitutes the law governing the world of The Red and the Black and substitutes for morality; it is different from the comparable but more extreme law which governs in The Charterhouse of Parma. There taste is more directly the dictate of public opinion; but in a sense Julien remains

⁵Ibid., p. 115.
answerable to himself, to his *devoir*. It is ruthlessly selfish; but selfishness is more respectable if there is a principle of selfishness behind it than if it is as unconsidered and random as it appears to be in *The Charterhouse of Parma*.

Tartuffe’s use of the word *devoir* indicates that he has no sense of it at all. To the upbraiding which he receives from Orgon’s family upon appearing with a policeman to take possession of their house, he says impertinently, "Tous vos emportements ne sauraient m’émouvoir, / Et je ne songe a rien qu’a faire mon devoir." To Orgon’s indignant question, "Mais t’es-tu souvenu que ma main charitable, / Ingrat, t’as retiré d’un état misérable?" Tartuffe replies insolently,

Oui, je sais quels secours j’en ai pu recevoir;  
Mais l’intérêt du Prince est mon premier devoir;  
De ce devoir sacré la juste violence  
Étouffe dans mon coeur toute reconnaissance.  

(V. vii)

Note then that Tartuffe uses his duty as an excuse to avoid performing what any conventional moralist and, for that matter, Julien, would consider duty. Julien does not use duty to excuse hypocrisy so much as he uses hypocrisy to effect duty: for him hypocrisy is an instrument, a tool. Tartuffe is less fastidious; his "duty" is clearly the plaything of his hypocrisy—which is to say, he has none.
It would be possible, of course, to argue that Tartuffe's devotion to self, or his hypocrisy, constitutes a law comparable to Julien's _devoir_ and perhaps in its own way as admirable. Thibaudet points out that we do not really know Tartuffe:

Nous ne savons d'ailleurs pas ce qu'est au fond Tartuffe, ni de quoi il est capable, nous qui ne l'avons pas vu vivre dans son roman, qui ne le connaissons directement que par la demi-journée représentée sur le théâtre, et les cinq ou six mois dans lesquels l'exposition nous introduit. Peut-être avait-il l'étoffe d'un Julien.⁶

Nevertheless, Julien incorporates his id into a stated principle before turning it loose on the world; Tartuffe, who is no more single-mindedly devoted to self, does not do that, and because any principle, even a bad one, is better than no principle, Tartuffe has the worst of it. His wickedness is without the structure which the framework of "duty" provides for Julien's.

Presenting Tartuffe as a man of energy, largely on the basis of Stendhal's reference to him as "un homme d'esprit et de caractère,"⁷ Thibaudet finds something admirable in his pursuit of Elmire; it does not falter before a suspicion of her true motive. It is possible to go this far with Thibaudet's admiration for Tartuffe, but there is a certain extravagance in comparing him with Samson:

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⁶Ibid., p. 122.

⁷Ibid., p. 111.
"Il n'est pas Samson, mais il se comporte comme Samson trahi par Dalila. Il n'a qu'une pensée, qu'un mouvement: saisir les colonnes de la maison qui abrite ses ennemis, sa menteuse maîtresse, maison qui est à lui en outre, les écraser, dût-il être écrasé lui-même."

It is difficult enough to believe that even Julien's revenge is generalized into an archetypal attempt to bring down his enemy's house; it is impossible to believe that Tartuffe is admirable enough to act under such noble motivation. In order to believe that his great object is revenge, it is necessary to believe that Tartuffe, unlike Valenod, that other hypocrite in low mode, is capable of being insulted. Such a conclusion is a far cry from Stendhal's recognition of a species of character in supreme selfishness. What Stendhal admired in Tartuffe was his unapologetic devotion to self, his sharp focus on his hypocrisy, which is as accommodating as Beylisme and is in fact an inferior species of Beylisme. But even to Stendhal, selfishness alone is not so admirable as to be capable of great deeds; it becomes admirable in combination with other traits which Tartuffe conspicuously lacks. In short, the fact that Stendhal perceived a certain character in Tartuffe does not imply that he also perceived in him the potential for nobility suggested by the opinion that his final acts are acts of revenge.

\[8\] Ibid., p. 118.
But even if Tartuffe is capable of being insulted, the question remains whether he is adequately motivated to feel deep humiliation. Thibaudet believes he is, for he believes that Tartuffe sincerely loves Elmire\(^9\) and that he despises Orgon as an idiot, so that when she delivers him over to her husband, Tartuffe "n'a pas subi un échec ordinaire, mais un humiliation atroce"\(^10\) which elicits the Samsonian revenge. Aside from the question of how deeply a character in low mode can love, there is certainly no clear reason to think that Tartuffe is more loving than lustful. There is no reason to believe that the preference which he expresses for Elmire over Mariane is more sincere than his other expressions; Tartuffe is merely an opportunist who would rather have two mistresses than one. He sacrifices nothing for Elmire and he risks little. Despite his implication to the contrary, there is no possibility at all that he is prepared to give up becoming Orgon's son-in-law for love of Elmire; for that matter, he does not even give up his religious hypocrisy in his attempt to seduce her. On the contrary, he uses it in that attempt. Nor does he perceive any particular danger in his pursuit of her; he is too confident of Orgon to fear repercussions from any complaint which Elmire might make to her husband.

\(^{9}\)Ibid., pp. 112, 118.

\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 118.
Moreover, Tartuffe does not react to the discovery of Elmire's treachery with the recriminations which one might expect him to direct toward a woman he loved. The order of events is this, that Orgon appears from his hiding place and excoriates Tartuffe, whom Elmire then addresses:

**ELMIRE, à Tartuffe.**
C'est contre mon humeur que j'ai fait tout ceci:
Mais on m'a mise au point de vous traiter ainsi.

**TARTUFFE**
Quoi? vous croyez . . . ?

**ORGON**
Allons, point de bruit, je vous prie.
Dénichons de céans, et sans cérémonie.

**TARTUFFE**
Mon dessein . . .

(IV, vii)

Observe that Tartuffe does not reproach Elmire at all; Elmire is not uppermost in his mind. His reaction is not the rage which one would expect from a man who perceives himself as sexually insulted; Tartuffe at first does not rage at all. Even though it is obvious that he realizes from Elmire's speech how she has cooperated in his discovery, what he does is attempt to pacify Orgon.

The obvious conclusion is that Tartuffe acts as he does precisely because he does not perceive a sexual insult. He has been deceived into showing Orgon his hand, but he has not been deceived sexually, for Elmire has never liked him, and Tartuffe has made
his belief in her sudden protestations of love depend upon her surrender. Since she never surrenders, he is not altogether her dupe. If Tartuffe is humiliated, it is before Orgon, not Elmire: Elmire has always known him for a scoundrel, but Orgon is suddenly enlightened. A suggestion of such discomfit may be contained in Tartuffe's first shocked, hopeful denials; but that embarrassment gives way quickly to the anger which results from seeing the ugliness of Orgon's intractability, which had previously operated in his favor, turned against himself: "Allons, point de bruit, je vous prie. / Dénichons de céans, et sans cérémonie."

If Tartuffe's attempt to expel the family and to have Orgon imprisoned is not an act of revenge arising from the humiliation of being betrayed by a beloved woman, what, then, is it? It is an act of pure expediency: Tartuffe believes that he has nothing to lose. He must either throw the family out or leave himself, for he has been found out utterly. He cannot be hypocritical around Orgon's family any longer, and since he also cannot live with them and not be hypocritical, the family has to go; Tartuffe will not live unprotected in an enemy camp.

It is not surprising that once he has taken so firm a stand as to expel the family from their house, the impetus of his malevolence impels him also to have Orgon arrested. Moreover, it is
difficult to believe with Thibaudet that Tartuffe perceives a risk in pushing his advantage so far;\textsuperscript{11} on the contrary, he no doubt feels that if he can prove Orgon a traitor, the ingratitude implicit in his expelling his benefactors will be less evident to authority. Better, Tartuffe must think, to offend enemies than friends of the state. He is not so much bringing himself to the attention of the authorities as he is trying to beat Orgon to them.

Therefore although it is true that Tartuffe and Julien both rush headlong toward destruction, it is only Julien who acts out of humiliation and desire for revenge. Unlike Julien's, Tartuffe's downfall is neither deliberate nor noble. For Julien renounces his material objectives; Tartuffe never does. Julien gives up voluntarily what must be taken from Tartuffe by force.

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 116-17.
CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL CLIMBER: JULIEN AND JOURDAIN

The socially ambitious bourgeois with money or taste or character enough to identify with the aristocracy, but without pedigree, was of perennial interest to both Stendhal and Molière, and they dealt with his predicament, at least peripherally, in practically all their works. In *The Red and the Black*, which is certainly his definitive statement on the subject, Stendhal's treatment verges noticeably on what appears to be Molière's definitive statement in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. The purpose of this chapter is to examine in those works the two areas in which Stendhal is particularly reminiscent of Molière. First, like Molière he asserts that the machinations of the socially ambitious bourgeois are doomed to failure by the necessity for a gentleman's being born into the aristocracy. Second, also like Molière, he capitalizes on the interplay between natural and institutional aristocracy— that is, between the man of ability and the born aristocrat. In doing so he considers the practical question of how the social climber gives himself away and answers that question precisely as Molière had answered it. In this second area I hope to show that he is not only reminiscent but also probably derivative of Molière.
The interest which Stendhal and Molière felt in the bourgeois motif arose from an obvious cause—both were bourgeois "gentlemen." Both came from the middle classes and rose substantially in the world, but they nevertheless continued to occupy somewhat doubtful positions in the social hierarchy. Stendhal in fact even came to grief over his "de" Beyle when he returned stuck with it to his amused hometown. 1 And Molière, after all his successes, remained an actor in seventeenth century France—a "social and religious pariah[ ]"2 who could not receive the sacraments or be buried in holy ground without repudiating his profession. The ambiguity of his rank in society was much more trying, however, to Stendhal. Despite the republicanism which he professed, Stendhal was born with the tastes and sensibilities of an aristocrat. He was not, however, born into a society which was either equipped or inclined to recognize his superior delicacy or which could adequately prepare him to exhibit it where it could be appreciated—in the salons of Paris. The result was that when he presented himself there he was at once wonderfully perceptive and horribly awkward. The tardiness of his exposure to a society which he was prepared to respect had allowed him to exaggerate its refinements as well as its


desirability so that he was quite paralyzed in its presence and was robbed of any spontaneity or grace which he might otherwise have possessed.

He was . . . preoccupied with making an effect . . .; he used to repeat to himself, like an actor, things that he would say in public and then never say them; he never knew what to do with his hands . . . until, having bought a beautiful cane to hide [their blushes], he found that he got on a hundred per cent better; in the salons he was too conscious of himself, and too anxious, to make more than occasional observations of well-bred people. There Stendhal's faculty for observing was impeded and paralyzed by the vanity in him. Thus it is that, although he moved in all classes of society, it is not about the best people that he gives us the clearest information. 3

Stendhal, in short, was not at home in the only stratum of society to which he was fitted by his values, his sensibilities, his ambitions.

Molière was able to deal more objectively with matters of caste because he was much less class conscious; indeed, in order to be an actor, he had willingly sacrificed many of the benefits of an education which must certainly have been meant by his father to raise him above his station. 4 His satisfaction with his place in society may be attributed in part to his having missed gentility by a less tantalizing margin than Stendhal, and in part to the fact that the society in which he lived

3 Emile Faguet, Politicians and Moralists of the Nineteenth Century, translated by Galton (Boston, n.d.), p. 29.

was more rigidly structured and his position in it more clearly and inexorably defined. Having virtually no hope of achieving aristocracy himself, he was less tempted than Stendhal to exaggerate its delights and to construct elaborate systems whereby he might share in them. Hence he was free to be a more democratic man. One consequence of this difference is that Molière entertained a certain democratic reverence for simplicity, a predictable corollary to which is suspicion of or at least irreverence toward aristocratic pretensions. His attitude is reflected in the frequency with which his "'natural' and humble types utter truth when unencumbered by intellectual pretensions." Time after time Molière allows members of his lower classes, his celebrated servants like Dorine in Tartuffe and Toinette in Le Malade Imaginaire, to outwit their betters and see through verbiage to truth with the incisiveness we ascribe to children. Even when he is most damaging to the lower classes, Molière often maintains a subtle loyalty to them. When he made the peasant Pierrot of Don Juan talk about "'que d'histoires et d'angigoriaux boutont ces Messieux-là: les courtisans!" (II. i), the court audience no doubt tittered at the naïveté of the peasant and enjoyed their own superiority; but it is the satire on the aristocrats, when those "angigoriaux" are described in all their ominous detail, which comes through the louder—at least to the twentieth century ear.

5 Walker, Molière, p. 43.
When Pierrot asks Charlotte to love him better, Molière ridicules him almost viciously (II. ii); but at the same time, the simple virtue of the sentiments which Pierrot expresses so badly is played off against the villainy of Don Juan's false, but sophisticated, declarations.

In contrast, Stendhal's insecurity was of such proportions that it precluded any such sympathy with commoners. He entertained few illusions about the virtues of the noble savage type and would have nothing to do with Molière's appreciation for untutored acumen; in *The Red and the Black* he finds "a hardness of heart [lying] at the base of all provincial worldly wisdom" (p. 133). Fouqué and Lodovico and even Ferrante Palla might be offered as exceptions to this rule, but all are much less wise than good; and it is worth noting that Lodovico and Ferrante Palla both appear in *The Charterhouse of Parma*, a novel in which Stendhal was distracted from the social question by virtue of the fact that his hero Fabrizio is firmly ensconced in the nobility. The only Untutored Wise in Stendhal are female members of the ruling class, most notably Mme. de Rênal, whose understanding, however, has less to do with innocence than with a feminine mystique. Julien himself is, of course, relatively untutored; but then Julien is not wise and he is not innocent except socially. Rarely does Stendhal give the lower or middle classes more credit than he must. And the credit he must give them for the ability to sprout genius unexpectedly is self-serving.
Some account must be taken of the view that Stendhal's exalta-
tion of the passions identifies him with the natural man, the bourgeois, 
as opposed to the artificial, civilized man—the aristocrat. 6 It 
seems to me that Stendhal, that most civilized of men, perceived even 
passion as a civilized virtue. He saw it, whether amatory or martial 
or whatever, as an art to be cultivated and refined by civilization and 
its elegant elaborations until it acquires a character not to be appreci-
ciated by the unspoiled. Second, account must also be taken of Sten-
dhal's much discussed republicanism. Howard Clews says that for 
Stendhal "a political belief was not an opinion to be held, but a life to 
be lived" and that his "liberalism... was by no means confined to 
his novels. He meant it. It seriously interfered with his career as 
a diplomat." 7 Faguet, on the other hand, merely scoffs. "Do you 
notice his manner of speaking when he talks of politics? He is a 
liberal, he writes from 1820 to 1840 and he never once uses the word 
'liberty.' Never!... A Liberal of 1830 who never uses the word 
liberty deserves to be awarded a gold medal." 8

Faguet's view is persuasive. It seems highly probable that 
Stendhal's early liberalism was composed of one part rebellion against

8 Faguet, Politicians and Moralists, p. 28.
his father and two parts chimerical hope that Napoleon would, by making the entry into society of a "man of heart" more or less official, provide a kind of aristocracy to which Stendhal might have access. Thus his liberalism was in a very real way diametrically opposed to the usual sense of the word. As Brussaly points out, "he was not a republican in the American sense. He left no doubt concerning that. 'Je ne veux faire la cour à personne, mais moins encore au people qu'au ministre.'" His interest in the common man was commensurately limited and condescending. "I had a loathing for all the vulgar bourgeois details of which Molière made use to express his thought," he writes in Henri Brulard.

These details reminded me too much of my own unhappy life. Not three days ago... as two bourgeois of my acquaintance were about to enact a comic scene of petty dissimulation... I walked off ten yards in order not to hear it. I loathe such things... Everything that is mean and vulgar in the bourgeois way reminds me of Grenoble, everything that reminds me of Grenoble fills me with horror, no, horror is too noble a word, with nausea. (p. 70)

Like many another political posturist, Stendhal used the rhetoric of the people to raise himself above them. But he was too self-absorbed and too deliberately egoistical to have disinterested feelings either social or political; his liberalism was, in short, a vehicle for

his ambition. One is inclined to go even further—to wonder whether politics (like the church) did not recommend itself to Stendhal primarily as an inexhaustible source of intrigue.

Although Molière respected the lower classes more than Stendhal did, he was not more sanguine about the hopes which the socially ambitious bourgeois might entertain. For although Molière recognized intrinsic worth and intellectual equality when they occurred in the servant and bourgeois classes, he was not so uncritical as to confuse virtues with one another wholesale; that is to say, intellectual sophistication was no equivalent in his system to social sophistication, nor could it lead to gentility. Whatever he thought of the virtue of the bourgeoisie, Molière entertained as little hope as Stendhal that a gentleman might rise successfully from that class. Jourdain's comic condition and the unhappy fate of not only Julien Sorel but also M. de Rênal indicate that Molière and Stendhal alike believed that aristocrats are born.

In Molière, being born to aristocracy implies a social or environmental necessity. Nobility is a function of birth, but only because the conditioning which a gentleman receives must begin in the cradle. It is there that one learns grace, ease, and arrogance—they cannot be learned late. By omitting any genetic necessity for noble birth, Molière in effect took a minor revenge on an aristocracy in which
he could not participate—he diminished its importance. For by his suggestion that the virtues associated with the aristocracy are environmental, not hereditary, he was able to make nobility a conditioned rather than a natural phenomenon, and the result was to take something away from it. Indeed, it is everywhere evident that he accorded the mysteries of aristocracy far less veneration than Stendhal did; at one point in *Don Juan* he effectively reduces them to the impenetrable intricacies of "grands entonnois de passement aux jambes, et parmi tout ça, tant de roubans, tant de roubans" (II.i). Perhaps such irreverence came easier to Molière, who spent more time with the aristocracy of his day than Stendhal did with his—time enough to learn scepticism, a lesson which it could be argued that the eternal adolescent Stendhal never really learned about anything.

Stendhal was so envious of aristocrats that to him the environmental necessity for being born into aristocracy was a legitimate distinction; he made much of it in showing how the social climber gives himself away. But in Stendhal aristocracy also implies a genetic necessity. For Stendhal believed that there is something finer in the nerves and sinews of born aristocrats than in those of ordinary mortals. Several times he accounts for Julien's superiority by suggesting that he may be the illegitimate son of a duke. The Chevalier de Beauvoisis starts such a rumor and the Marquis de La Mole encourages it
(p. 276). More concretely, however, Pirard gives the idea substance. "'Could it be,' " he wonders, "'that blood will tell?'" (p. 240). In addition, there are suggestions that Mme. de Rénal's superiority is genetic. Julien thinks that her beauty, "modest and touching, yet so thoughtful, [was] a kind not to be found among the lower classes at all" (p. 78). Stendhal attributes to her something of a princess-and-the-pea kind of sensitivity; while looking for the portrait of Napoleon hidden in Julien's bed, "she raised the mattress and thrust her hand into the stuffing so violently that she skinned her fingers. But, though very sensitive to little hurts of this kind, she was unconscious of this one" (p. 67). Mme. de Rénal's sensitivity may be offered less as a side effect of her nobility than as evidence for it, since her rank, like Julien's, is somewhat ambiguous. Although she has titled relatives, she is after all only country nobility, the wife of a rich bourgeois who made his money in nails, and who is in many ways in a position analogous to Julien's, the great difference being that de Rénal is not by nature as fine as Julien. In fact, the bourgeois whose moral defeat in The Red and the Black can be attributed to his ignoble blood is not Julien but de Rénal. It is what Stendhal would have considered typically bourgeois pettiness which causes de Rénal to keep Julien on when his impulse is to turn him out early: "'The young fool . . . has made a sort of reputation in my house. If I dismiss him, Valenod may take
him in, or else he will marry Elisa; in either case, he will be able to laugh in his sleeve at me'" (p. 64). Again, his essential ignobility makes him decide that his wife is innocent of an affair with Julien; he allows money to settle a question of honor (pp. 162-63).

Stendhal believed in the genetic superiority of the nobility because he needed to believe in it. Happiness for him, as for Julien, lay in anticipation. He had always to be wanting something, to be working toward a goal, however abstract or unrealistic or impossible of realization. The more perfect the goal, the more perfectly he could desire it and the happier he could be. It is my contention that because he perceived it as a goal, Stendhal attempted to perfect aristocracy by compounding its salient feature, which is exclusivity. He made aristocracy hinge on the utterly inexorable, and so perfectly exclusive, circumstance of birth.

Clearly Stendhal had difficulty integrating his own desire for nobility with his willing belief--stipulation, almost--that it must be duly inherited. He reacted with some confusion to the conflict between the facts that he wanted with all his id to be an aristocrat, and that any aristocracy to which he might belong would lose the exclusive character which had made him want to belong to it in the first place. Of course his problem was incredibly idle; it amounted to squaring his real-life circumstances with his daydreams. Stendhal wanted to fit
the everyday Marie-Henri Beyle, son of Chérubin, into his daydreams of nobility.

His solutions to his dilemma were essentially three. The most original and least satisfactory was to hope fervently that he might turn out to be the bastard son of an aristocrat. That ambition is evidenced in the hints mentioned above that Julien is such. Second, he tried denying the problem. On the one hand, he wrote into The Red and the Black an assertion (marred, however, by the hints of Julien's illegitimate, noble blood) that although a bourgeois may not be able to become a gentleman, he can nevertheless be finer than gentlemen born. On the other hand, he hoped that the liberalism of first Napoleon and later the constitutional monarchy of Louis-Philippe would change the conditions of exclusivity which had defined aristocracy without destroying its value. That is, he hoped that aristocracy would change its terms. Such a solution was not without promise practically speaking; Napoleon did create a new hereditary nobility and he did make easier the entry into society of energetic men from the lower classes. But even in the real world, which was much less demanding than Stendhal's imaginary one, the new aristocracy did not command as much respect as that of the ancien régime.

Third, Stendhal worked out a system based on the familiar idea that the substance of aristocracy is spiritual and its manifestation
social: that is, that institutional aristocracy is a natural development
of nobility of soul, vitality, energy. But when one generation's
nobility of soul appears in the next diluted—or perhaps even refined—
into delicacy of manner, then the aristocracy, instead of being com-
posed of people of real superiority, has deteriorated into conditioned
superiority, which is at best nobility of manners, at worst effete degen-
eracy. In short, where Molière granted aristocracy no genetic dis-
tinction at all, Stendhal granted it the genetic superiority which was a
condition of his delighted adoration but offered genetic debility as a
corollary. This is manifested in the accusations of impotence and
decadence which appear in The Red and the Black and especially in
Armance. As Thibaudet points out, Armance is a novel about the end
of the aristocracy, The Red and the Black one about the beginning of the
elite bourgeoisie. "Armance est le roman de l'absence d'énergie, au
sens le plus physique du mot, puis-qu'il s'agit d'énergie virile; symbole
précis de la deficience de l'énergie dans les hautes classes." 10 In
The Red and the Black we also see the anemia of those specimens of the
aristocracy who frequent the Hôtel de La Mole. "'High birth bestows
a hundred qualities the absence of which is offensive to me; Julien is
a case in point,' [Mathilde] thought. 'But it atrophies those qualities
of the heart which cause a man to be condemned to death'" (p. 292).

10 Thibaudet, Stendhal, p. 97.
It is against what he represents as an impotent aristocracy that Stendhal offers his man of energy—whom he sees now as a misbegotten aristocrat, now a spontaneous mutant, but always as himself: a man who arises from the bourgeoisie in possession of the characteristics which originally constituted aristocracy. This view ingeniously makes the new aristocrat even nobler than the old one; it elevates him to the level of a patriarch.

There may have been a disinterested moral judgment involved in Stendhal’s assessment of the ills afflicting the nobility; other people have after all come to his conclusion; it is hardly original. But clearly his motives were not altogether pure. He had no desire to insulate a new or renewed aristocracy against the pleasant evils which had drained but also given its enviable character to the old one; a man of heart and the "new" aristocrat, Julien does not spurn his ill-gotten title of Chevalier de La Vernaye and he is pleased to pass as the bastard son of the Marquis de La Mole’s friend the duke. The fact is that Stendhal coveted for himself, as for Julien, all the traditional trappings, privileges, and potential for evil of the old aristocracy. He dreamed of a new aristocracy in which everything was just the same as the old one, except that Stendhal was in it. He did not dream of doing away with an evil system; he was merely trying to make a theoretical place in it for himself. His novels helped him to that end; in them he created "that
world—long sought in vain—where he would find the complex needs of his strange being satisfied." 11

When Stendhal brought Julien Sorel into contact with the drawing room of the Hôtel de La Mole to show the interplay between natural and institutional superiority (and, incidentally, to show how the parvenu betrays his origins), he was following an example which Molière had set, although the latter had, of course, gone about it less directly: Molière was playing for a seventeenth century court audience and Stendhal, as he himself informed us, was playing for 1935. Hence Molière frequently lets the peasant or servant class represent natural superiority, while the bourgeoisie represents institutional superiority, and the dialogue between servant and bourgeois master (Dorine and Orgon in Tartuffe, Toinette and Argan in Le Malade Imaginaire, Nicole and Monsieur Jourdain in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme), in which the master always comes off badly, is as far as he carries his point; he does not insist that the exchange between peasant and bourgeois represent an analogue to the contest between bourgeois and aristocrat. Additionally, the superior people (whether peasant/servant or bourgeois) whom Molière depicts in inferior circumstances are not socially ambitious; they have no desire

to rise above their station and if questioned, being imminently sensible, they would no doubt agree with Cléon'te's position when Jourdain asks him if he is a gentleman:

CLEONTE. Monsieur, la plupart des gens sur cette question n'hésitent pas beaucoup. On tranche le mot aisément. Ce nom ne fait aucun scrupule à prendre, et l'usage aujourd'hui semble en autoriser le vol. Pour moi, je vous l'avoue, j'ai les sentiments sur cette matière un peu plus délicats: je trouve que toute impos- ture est indigne d'un honnête homme, et qu'il y a de la lâcheté à déguiser ce que le Ciel nous a fait naître, à se parer aux yeux du monde d'un titre dérobé, à se vouloir donner pour ce qu'on n'est pas. Je suis né de par- ents, sans doute, qui ont tenu des charges honorables. Je me suis acquis dans les armes l'honneur de six ans de services, et je me trouve assez de bien pour tenir dans le monde un rang assez passable. Mais, avec tout cela, je ne veux point me donner un nom où d'autres en ma place croyaient pouvoir prétendre, et je vous dirai franchement que je ne suis point gentilhomme. (III.xii)

Thus Molière never deals directly with the problem which preoccupied Stendhal, namely, that of what happens when natural superiority attempts to attach to itself the graces and privileges of institutional aristocracy. Rather he shows us what happens when mediocrity attempts to attach them, for it is only his inferior bourgeois who are socially ambitious--Jourdain of Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Magdelon and Cathos of Les Précieuses Ridicules. One wonders what would have happened if instead of Magdelon and Cathos, La Grange and Du Croisy had opted for rising socially--if Dorine rather than Tartuffe had attempted to take over Orgon's house, if Cléon'te instead of Jourdain had attempted to be
a gentleman. Perhaps among the reasons for the disparity between Stendhal's head-on approach and Molière's glancing one is not only that time and circumstances made him less passionate at the same time as they required him to exercise a certain caution, but also that despite a sceptical turn of mind, Molière was enough a creature of his time to have absorbed, at least subliminally, some of the semireligious valence which highly structured societies impart to their aristocracies as a stabilizing element. Additionally, of course, there are the exigencies of the comic mode; it can hardly afford to look too closely at concepts like nobility and questions aimed at defining its nature. To entertain the question whether nobility exists is to entertain a concept of the sublime, and sublimity is no better suited to comedy than the limerick to tragedy. Ambition grafted onto a noble spirit has, as Julien would indicate, a tragic potential. But grafted onto a mediocre or ignoble spirit, it possesses the kind of comic potential so aptly fulfilled by Jourdain and the precious ladies.

It is when he shows how the parvenu betrays his origins that Stendhal's treatment of Julien Sorel parallels Molière's treatment of Jourdain. First, it is evident from even a casual reading that if we discount his stupidity, Jourdain is made ridiculous principally by the intensity with which he pursues his ends; it keeps him from seeing himself as others see him and removes any protection which he might have had against the ridiculous. This is nowhere more apparent than when, having been advised by his dancing master that to accomplish a
respectful salute to a lady, "il faut . . . marcher vers elle avec trois révérences en avant" (II. i), Jourdain is so determined to be correct that he gives stage directions to the marquise:

MONSIEUR JOURDAIN, après avoir fait deux révérences, se trouvant trop près de Dorimène. Un peu plus loin, Madame.
DORIMÈNE. Comment?
MONSIEUR JOURDAIN. Un pas, s'il vous plaît.
DORIMÈNE. Quoi donc?
MONSIEUR JOURDAIN. Reculez un peu, pour la troisième.
DORANTE. Madame, Monsieur Jourdain sait son monde.

(III. xvi)

Here, as in the scene during which he fences with Nicole (III. iii) and repeatedly throughout the play, Jourdain's intensity has so intoxicated him that he loses the faculty of self-criticism and so becomes ridiculous. And when his ambition makes him evaluate other people as uncritically as he has evaluated himself, he is led to accept Cléonte as the Grand Turk and so meets his comic defeat; his very desire has, by virtue of its intensity, frustrated its object, both in the external matter of securing a son-in-law who is a gentleman and in the internal matter of being a gentleman himself.

Obviously there is a vast qualitative difference between the absurdities of which Julien and Jourdain are guilty. But granting the distinction in genre, most of the difference between them is due to the fact that in the one case ambition acts on an insensitive man and in the
other on one whose sensitivity is morbidly acute. Julien's critical faculties, therefore, are never in total suspension like Jourdain's, but they are frequently obviated or at least misdirected by the desperate urgency of his ambitions, and the result is that he, too, becomes ridiculous through his failure to see himself as he is seen by others.

Hence in his attempt to seduce Mme. de Rênal Julien is quite without any sense of the hilarity in his refusal to leave anything to chance or to the inspiration of the moment. Drawing on Fouqué's confidences and the little he had read about love in the Bible, he planned a detailed offensive. Since, without admitting it even to himself, he was very nervous, he wrote out his plan.

The next morning Mme. de Rênal was alone in the drawing room for a few minutes. She asked, "Have you no other name but Julien?"

Our hero didn't know how to answer this very flattering question. Such an eventuality had not been allowed for in his plan. (p. 90)

In this instance Julien is ridiculous only to the reader, since no one else sees him diligently writing out his plan of attack. But he is not always so fortunate. His pretension to being a man of the world is necessarily carried out in public, with the result that "he, who had never had a mistress in his life, persisted in playing the role of a Don Juan, and kept making an ass of himself all day long" (p. 92). He plays with Mme. de Rênal's foot in full view of the subprefect, so that Mme. Derville thinks, "'This pretty boy behaves like a fool!'" (p. 92). And the morning after he has accomplished the seduction of
Mme. de Rênal, he crowns the other absurdities of their courtship with his naive opinion that it is "beneath his dignity not to go back to his room by broad daylight, carelessly" (p. 97). Unlike Jourdain, however, Julien learns: by the time he takes his spill while riding with Count Norbert, he is clever enough to be candid. He realizes that he is seen as a provincial, and he satisfies himself with being the best provincial possible.

Julien is again like Jourdain in that the intensity of his ambition causes him to evaluate the outside world, as well as himself, inaccurately. Jourdain does not wish to see through Dorante's friendship, Covielle's flattery, or the Grand Turk's gibberish; his desire for distinction causes him to invest his imagination in these precisely as Julien's desire for distinction causes him to invest his imagination in the institution of aristocracy. The intensity of his desire to belong to that aristocracy leads him to exaggerate its virtues so that when he is close enough to grasp it--and, therefore, to see its limitations--the shock of his disillusionment destroys him: he realizes that in Mathilde he has already possessed the ultimate expression of aristocracy, and he cannot recover. His reaction to possessing aristocracy is like his reaction to possessing Mme. de Rênal: "'My God! ... is that all there is to it?''' (p. 96). He is left too empty to live; his execution is really in the nature of a suicide.
Secondly, both Julien and Jourdain are robbed by their ambition of intellectual independence; their devotion to aristocracy is revealingly slavish. It works against them in ways which real aristocrats—Dorante, say, or Mathilde—would never permit. Again Jourdain is the extreme expression of a trait which Julien renders with restraint. Such is Jourdain's infatuation that he bows blindly to any logic which holds forth any promise, however specious, of the distinction which he seeks. He believes in the jargon of the fencing master who proves that it is impossible for him to lose a contest and who "sait tuer un homme par raison démonstrative" (II.ii), and in the sentiments of Dorante, who assures him that he could borrow money in many places and takes it from Jourdain only to do honor to their friendship. In the same vein, he discounts the excellent and moving argument of his wife ("Je veux un homme, en un mot, qui m'ait obligation de ma fille, et à qui je puisse dire: Mettez-vous là, mon gendre, et dînez avec moi") with an observation whose sole virtue is to allow him to identify himself momentarily with a station above his own: "Voilà bien les sentiments d'un petit esprit" (III.xii). He is blind to his own best interest. The ultimate expression of his slavishness is his wish that "il m'eût coûté deux doigts de la main, et être né comte ou marquis" (III.xiv).
It has been seen that Julien would cheerfully trade his legitimacy for higher rank, but he provides an even more precise parallel to Jourdain when he shows himself willing to symbolically cut off offending members in the interests of his ambition, by binding up his arm to punish himself for having betrayed his admiration for Napoleon (p. 34). (The members are in both cases "offending" in the sense that their removal is perceived as constituting an efficacious sacrifice.) In other ways, too, he as much as Jourdain is at the mercy of what he imagines to be other people's superiority. "'At least . . . my little affair with the mistress of the house will give me something to do for a while,'" he tells himself, but the truth is that "his deepest feelings were at variance with his cavalier language. He was afraid of Mme. de Rénal because of her very pretty dress" (p. 90). Such an attitude represents an ignominious retreat from the position that class distinctions, especially those based on money, are to be despised: "'I will have to show them that though my poverty may do business with their wealth, my heart is a thousand leagues removed from their insolence, and set in too high a sphere to be reached by their petty marks of disdain or favor'" (p. 79). His periodical abdication of his position is so complete that he is capable of grovelling before his desire and even of enjoying his humiliation in doing so:
"I knew it would happen," he told himself bitterly. "[Mme. de Renal's] love has been eclipsed by the delight of entertaining a king in her house. All this fuss has turned her head. She will love me again when her brain is no longer addled by notions about caste."

Surprising thing--he loved her all the more for it.

(p. 108)

Thirdly, their bourgeois background makes both Julien and Jourdain betray themselves through their excessive vanity and self-consciousness. Jourdain's opening lines are about his clothes; he parts his dressing gown to display his exercise suit before his tutors and has the temerity to ask for a handsome garment "pour mieux entendre" (I. ii). During the second act his tailors dress him in a new coat and he struts about the stage to the flourishes of the entire orchestra. Other expressions of his vanity include his weakness for titles of respect (he is on the verge of giving his whole purse to a journeyman tailor who addresses him as "Monseigneur" and "Votre Grandeur" [II. v]), and his desire to possess a woman of quality—a dignity which he asserts that he would buy at any price (III. vi).

His self-consciousness is the other side of his vanity; it constantly asks,

"Que dites-vous de mes livrées?" and "Est-ce que les gens de qualité apprennent aussi la musique?" (I. ii)

"Est-ce que les gens de qualité... ont [des concerts de musique chez eux]?" (II. i)

"Les personnes de qualité portent les fleurs en enbas?" (II. v)
Julien's self-consciousness is on equally conspicuous guard. When he has just seduced Mme. de Rênal, his question echoes Jourdain's anxiety: "Have I failed in any way with respect to what I owe myself? Have I played my part well?" (p. 96). Again,

His bad humor, unable to find any fault in the tone of politeness, even interest, with which Norbert had addressed him, set to mulling over the answer he, Julien, had made to this civil speech. He detected a shade of servility in it. (p. 287)

His self-consciousness serves him badly when he first enters the de Rênal household:

The pride he felt at the contact of clothes so different from what he was used to wearing excited him so, and he wanted so much to hide his joy, that there was something brusque and foolish about every movement he made. Mme. de Rênal watched him with astonishment in her eyes.

"Be grave, sir," M. de Rênal said to him, "if you want the respect of my children and of my servants." (p. 41)

But as he demonstrates when he enters Parisian society, where he dresses immaculately but then forgets his dress when it is complete, Julien is not so simplistic as to fall into dandyism, a wholly inferior expression of an inferior pride. Clothes and titles are to him merely symbols of aristocracy; to Jourdain they are its substance. While Julien is not free of petty vanity, it is in the more consequential areas of love and of morality that he provides the most consistent analogue to Jourdain. Like him, Julien wants to possess women who will
improve his position in the world and his opinion of himself. Of his affair with Mme. de Rénal, we are told that "he was still in love with ambition. His was the joy of possessing (he, the poor, the wretched, the despised!) such a noble, such a beautiful woman" (p. 99). His pride, in fact, eclipses his sexual pleasure: "Instead of being attentive to the raptures he had awakened and to the remorse that only heightened their intensity, he could think of nothing but his duty" (p. 95). Of his experience with Mathilde we are told that

he was astonished at the absence of happiness; finally, in order to feel it, he appealed to his reason. He saw that he was highly esteemed by this proud girl, who never bestowed her praise without reservation; by this line of reasoning, he attained to a happiness based on self-esteem. (p. 342)

Stendhal observes that had Mme. de Rénal been more sophisticated, "she might have feared for the duration of a love that seemed to be sustained by nothing but surprise and delighted vanity" (p. 100). To the extent to which she does not answer the needs of Julien's vanity, he is no more interested in her than Jourdain in his marquise; he is capable of forgetting her completely, even immediately before a likely conquest, and that his first:

His soul was lost in contemplation of what he imagined he would one day meet with in Paris. First of all there would be a woman, far more beautiful, more intelligent by far, than any he had ever seen in the country. He would love her passionately; he would be loved in return. (p. 81)
Indeed, it is only when he is rapturously studying Mme. de Rênal's closet, like Daisy afloat in a sea of Gatsby's shirts, that he realizes "'It's not possible . . . that they have anything finer than this in Paris'" and then, at that point, finally has "no objection whatsoever to his happiness" (p. 100). His entire affair with Mathilde and all but the end of his affair with Mme. de Rênal are expressions of vanity.

When their vanity acts on their moral judgment, the effect in both Julien and Jourdain is to produce hypocrisy. Jourdain's most significant expression of it consists in claiming for himself all the rewards which require gentlemanly airs, while refusing to reward the truly gentlemanly instinct which makes Cléonte refuse to claim a gentility to which he does not feel entitled. An equally outrageous example occurs when he remonstrates with his wife for her indignation at his attempt to seduce the marquise in Mme. Jourdain's own house: "Vous me venez faire des affronts devant tout le monde," he raves, "et vous chassez de chez moi des personnes de qualité" (IV. ii). His vanity here has led him into the hypocrisy of attacking his wife's pecadillo with the righteous indignation normally reserved for first-class sins, while he shows no compunction about his own immorality which provoked her. Jourdain's behavior and his judgment of the behavior of others betray a vanity that divorces his moral sense absolutely from any concept of justice; it is not injustice which offends him, but inconvenience.
When Julien's vanity acts on questions of morality, the results are equally outrageous; particularly when he assesses his duty to the Marquis de La Mole, it produces consummate hypocrisy. In determining that he may righteously spoil the count's happiness in his daughter by seducing her and making her Mme. Sorel, but may not spoil it in his son by firing on him should he be challenged, Julien demonstrates that like Jourdain's, his own convenience is the touchstone of his morality. For in effect he reduces his duty to the marquis to whatever is becoming to Julien. Hence his question, "'Where lies, first, my duty, second, my interest?'" (p. 434) is immoderately hypocritical. The truth is that his duty as he perceives it is to act in a manner becoming to himself; and since according to his value system, acting in a manner becoming to himself, even if it costs him materially, is in his best interests, he really needed to ask only one question: "Where lies my interest?" Thus his delicacy regarding the matter of what he owes the marquis is essentially bogus. Julien's duty is a principle and it is real; but it is utterly selfish. He can have no duty to a second person unless it is prompted by duty to himself.

The real question which Julien is asking himself, then, has to do with what he considers socially acceptable, not with what is moral. In effect Stendhal allows Julien's moral deliberations to boil down to a question of what is socially becoming--that is, to a question of
etiquette; and in doing so he cheerfully takes on a sin of which he had, with evident delight and approbation, accused Molière. In his essay "On the Morality of Molière," he in effect accuses the playwright of an immorality stemming from the fact that he was motivated by social rather than moral concerns. If such motivation is corrupt, it is clear that Stendhal is at least as corrupt as Molière. He, more than Molière, took great and perverse delight in insisting that the ability to function gracefully in society is an acceptable objective of human existence, thus defining the human condition in terms as finite as possible. There is, of course, a good possibility that Stendhal misunderstood Molière altogether, but that question is beyond the scope of this paper. What is important here is that Stendhal apparently perceived in Molière's social (as opposed to moral) orientation an attitude toward life which, when analyzed, reveals three separate assumptions which happen also to underlie The Red and the Black. The first of these assumptions is that desire for social superiority is a primary motivating factor in human behavior. The second is that we become socially superior by conforming to whatever standards society has determined shall constitute superiority. Therefore if society has distinguished charity as a virtue, morality may consist in distributing

welfare checks; if it has distinguished fidelity to Christianity, morality may consist in burning witches. By the same token, if society distinguishes *politesse* as the greatest virtue, etiquette becomes something very uncomfortably like morality. And so we arrive at the third assumption underlying both Stendhal's perception of Molière's philosophy and *The Red and the Black*, namely, that morality and manners are the same thing. This last assumption is a decided blow to philosophical sensibilities, since through it Stendhal not only defined morality in terms of manners but also went far toward defining crime (sin, that beloved, and hitherto bottomless, cup) in terms of vulgarity.

During the dinner at Valenod's, for instance, Julien takes credit for a traditional morality in his objections to the treatment of the prisoners. "'They may be hungry at this very moment,' he said to himself. His throat tightened. It was impossible for him to eat, almost to talk" (p. 147). In addition, he "found something shameful . . . that smelled of stolen money" about Valenod's house. But although at Valenod's Julien is liberal with his piety, it must be recalled that he, too, intends to steal his livelihood: it is after all a cynical and atheistic Julien who asks himself, "'What will I be doing all my life? . . . I will be selling a place in heaven to the faithful'" (p. 187). And Julien quite as effectively as Valenod brings grief to the people whose path he crosses, de Rénals and La Moles. His judgment
of himself is however far less harsh than his judgment of Valenod. The basis upon which he distinguishes between wicked and just behavior is evidently not whether it injures other people, but rather whether it injures them in a socially acceptable manner or in a vulgar one.

Valenod's treatment of his prisoners is not the essentially disgusting thing about him to either Julien or Stendhal. The essentially disgusting thing is his tastelessness. Notice, for instance, how bad taste and bad morals are stirred together in this paragraph about Valenod's villainy in making his prisoners stop singing:

From time to time, snatches of a popular song were audible—a rather indecent song, one must admit, that an inmate was singing. M. Valenod looked to one of his servants in full livery, who disappeared, and shortly after, no more singing was to be heard. At the same moment a valet offered Julien some Rhine wine in a green glass, and Mme. Valenod carefully pointed out to him that this wine cost nine francs a bottle at the vineyard. Holding the green glass, Julien said to M. Valenod, "They've stopped singing that nasty song."

"By George! I should think so," answered the director triumphantly. "I've had those beggars silenced." (p. 147)

Then,

"Let's forget," [Julien] said to himself as he walked away, "even the fact that their money was stolen from poor inmates, who moreover are kept from singing! Would M. de Renal ever think of telling his guests the price of every bottle of wine he served them?" (p. 149) [italics mine]

The evidence is that Julien and Stendhal are both better able to forget the inmates than they are to forget a scene like that occasioned by the
broken wine glass. It might be added that later on, when Julien explains to Mme. de Rénal why he could never go into Valenod's service, what he mentions is not the latter's immorality but his vulgarity: "'You have accustomed me too well to an elegant life; the vulgarity of those people would kill me.'" (p. 165).

Also like Jourdain, Julien frequently misinterprets the motives of others. Jourdain does this by his refusal to be skeptical, Julien by his excessive cynicism, both of which are revealing. Jourdain believes in the compliments of his teachers, failing to realize that in truth they endure him only because "son argent redresse les jugements de son esprit" (I. i); he takes the journeyman tailor's politeness as an expression of respect rather than of greed, and Dorante's attentions as an expression of friendship rather than of self-interest. Finally he fails to perceive its opposite in Lucile's expression of filial obedience ("Il est vrai que vous êtes mon père, je vous dois entière obéissance, et c'est à vous à disposer de moi selon vos volontés" [V. v]) when she has recognized Cléonte in the Grand Turk.

Jourdain's misinterpretation of the motives of others is comic because he believes they think better of him than they do. Julien's is tragic, because he believes they think worse. Julien's pride, for example, makes him misinterpret the genuine and probably perceptive love of the de Rénal children as the kind of affection they might express.
to a puppy (p. 68). In the ninth chapter of Book I, when Mme. de
Rénal pushes him away from her, he interprets her act as that of a
rich woman who slights him, when in fact it is the act of a jealous
woman who loves him (p. 67). He mistakes in her effort to be virtu-
ous

an intention to put him in his place.

The smile of pleasure died on his lips; he remem-
bered the position he occupied in society, and especially
in the eyes of a rich and noble heiress. In a moment
there was nothing to be seen in his features but haughti-
ness and anger with himself. (p. 79)

The same kind of suspicion, which had made his disastrous relationship
with Mathilde necessary in the first place, acts to spoil it:

"Could these nice young people be scheming to make
a fool of me? ... Their plan is clear enough. Mlle.
de La Mole is trying to convince me that she is interested
in me, so she can make a spectacle of me in front of
her fiancé." (p. 320)

When he scales the wall to her bedroom window, the pistols with which
he is armed are the least of his elaborate precautions.

It is not until his relationship with Mathilde has convinced
him of an equality which his affair with Mme. de Rénal had only made
him suspect that he is free to read the truth, not only with regard to
other people's motives toward him but also with regard to the key
question of the relative virtues possessed by the high and low ranks of
society. Julien again invites comparison with Jourdain in this final
matter of miscalculating the distance between himself and his superiors.
Jourdain vastly underestimates it, a fact which provides much of the humor in the play; he naively thinks that by hiring a fistful of instructors in popular subjects he can close the distance between himself and those he envies. He operates on the assumption that a little special knowledge in a few conspicuous fields can make up the difference, failing altogether to realize the impossibility of learning (or even learning to recognize) the multitudinous and infinitesimal usages, as ingrained in the aristocracy as the mother tongue, which must inexorably set him apart. "Je me fais habiller aujourd'hui comme les gens de qualité," he says (I. i), and betrays his credulous opinion that he can put aristocracy on and take it off with his coat. Responding with delight to being addressed as a gentleman by his tailor's apprentice, he meditates, "Mon gentilhomme! Voilà ce que c'est de se mettre en personne de qualité" (II. v). He has no idea that nobility or subtlety or even just ingrained conditioning gives substance to the concept of gentlemanliness, and his idea of even the surface requirements of gentility is so plastic that he is delighted by Covielle's denial that Jourdain, Senior, had been a merchant:

Lui marchand! C'est pure médisance, il ne l'a jamais été. Tout ce qu'il faisait, c'est qu'il était fort obligeant, fort officieux; et comme il se connaissait fort bien en étoffes, il en allait choisir de tous les côtés, les faisait apporter chez lui, et en donnait à ses amis pour de l'argent. (IV. iii)
On the whole Julien's calculation of the distance between himself and members of the nobility goes to the opposite extreme; he, being highly imaginative and as sensitive as Jourdain is insensitive, vastly overestimates the difference between himself and people of quality, with several results. An immediate and obvious one is his shyness; when he first goes to the de Rênal house he must urge himself on with a battle cry, "'To arms!'" (p. 35), and when he gets there he is nevertheless too afraid to ring the bell and in his confusion even weeps before Mme. de Rênal. When he goes to seminary, he faints away in the Abbé Pirard's room (p. 176) and, although by this time considerably more sophisticated, on first putting in an appearance at the Hôtel de La Mole,

Julien stopped dumbfounded in the middle of the courtyard.

"Try to look more intelligent," said the Abbé Pirard. "Horrible thoughts occur to you, and then you act like a child! Where is Horace's nil admirari?" (p. 245)

A more important result is that he is also overanxious. While Mme. de Rênal is busy admiring "his intelligence, his beauty, her heart transfixed by the possibility of his departure" (p. 87), Julien is thinking, "'In this woman's opinion... I am not well-born'" (p. 87). He invests aristocracy with an almost magical quality. But because of his sensitivity Julien is able to do precisely what Jourdain's insensitivity led him falsely to think he could do: Julien literally does
put aristocracy on with his blue coat and take it off when he dons his black one, at the request of the marquis (pp. 277-78).

The parallels to Jourdain hold true only part way through Julien's development, becoming less conspicuous as Julien becomes more enlightened. In the final chapters of the novel, when Julien undergoes his tragic recognition of truth, he ceases to evaluate himself and the outside world inaccurately, recoups his intellectual independence, conquers vanity and is finally able to take accurate measure of both aristocrats and the institution of aristocracy. What this amounts to is that Julien stops being an ambitious parvenu; although he begins by providing a specific analogue to Jourdain in these several areas, he ends with nothing more in common with him than that they have both failed materially for the reason that lack of proper birth blinded them to the true nature of what they sought to become.
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